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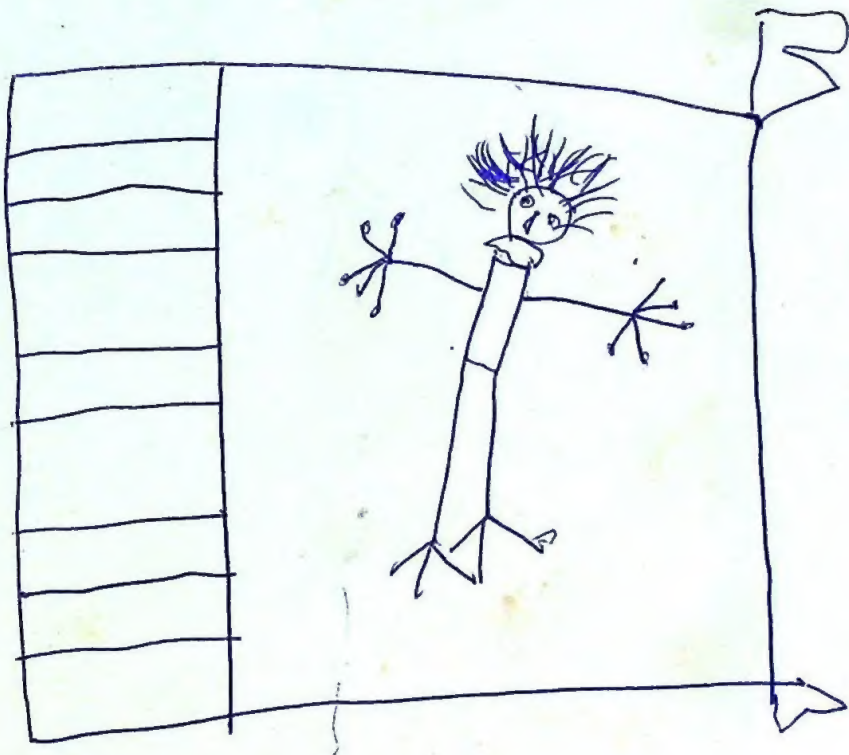
Treasures  
of  
Everyday  
Art



RAJA DINKAR KELKAR MUSEUM









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of  
Everyday  
Art



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# Treasures of Everyday Art

RAJA DINKAR KELKAR MUSEUM



MARG PUBLICATIONS



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### COVER:

*Portrait of Mastani Begum*

*Photographs by:*

*D. H. Sahiar*

*Rehana*

*B. J. Bilimoria*

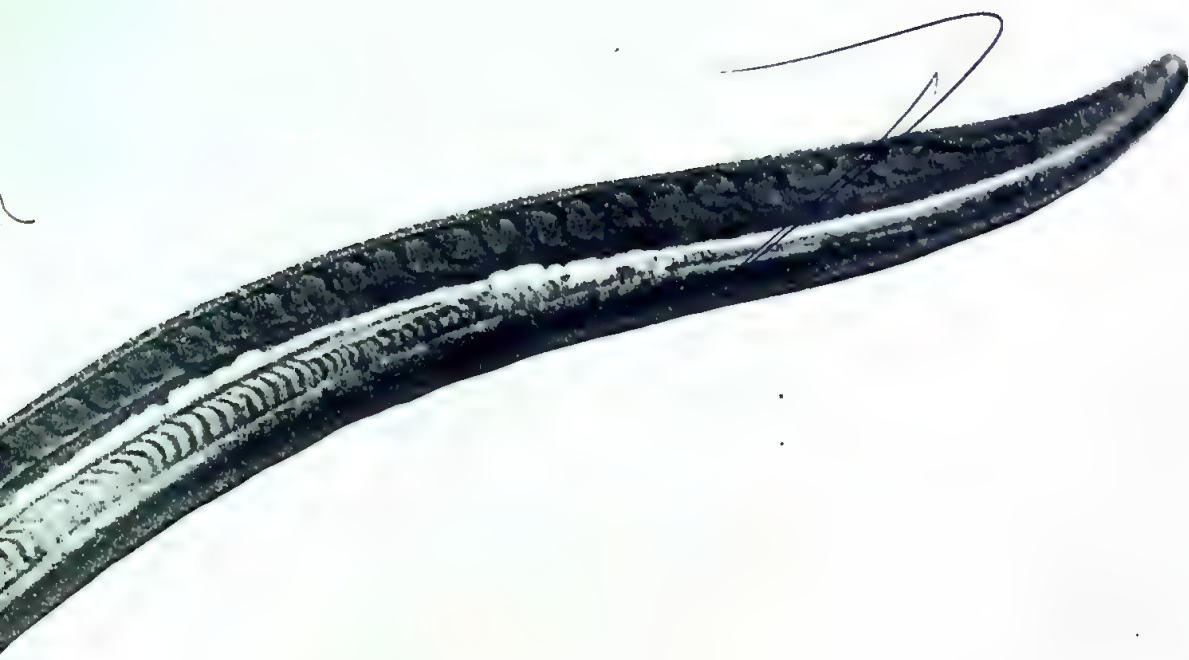
*Courtesy: Raja`Dinkar Kelkar Museum, Pune.*



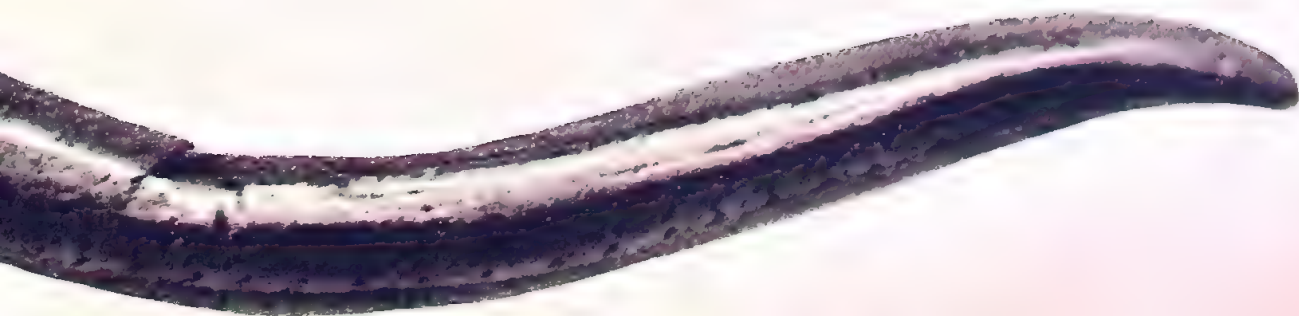




## Homage to Dinkar Kelkar



A great little man!  
— that is the spontaneous exclamation  
which comes from us  
when we see the 83-year-old young man,  
Dinkar Kelkar,  
come up from within the inner sanctum  
of his museum.





It is the natural wish of every visitor,  
who goes through the fantastic 'wonder house',  
in which one room opens into another and insinuates itself  
into a third in a sur-realist composition,  
to see the maker of this dreamworld.

We have passed through  
the carved doors of old houses.  
We have seen the carved projections of windows.  
We have noticed the elaborate  
mandala-like *divas* of brass,  
and the hanging oil lamps with chains of bronze.  
We have contemplated the icons of the Gods.  
We have admired the Maratha Madonna  
with the child.  
We have been dazed by the intricate forms  
of the hundreds of nut-crackers.  
We have been struck by the fantasy of the  
elaborate Veenas turned into peacocks.

1. A dramatic detail of Gaja-  
lakshmi lamp being bathed by  
two elephants.  
South India, c. early 20th  
century.





We have been overwhelmed by the proliferation of forms  
that Dinkar Kelkar has collected from the villages,  
the small towns and obscure settlements  
of tribal people of our country.

We are told that he has done it all,  
single-handed,  
by travelling thousands of miles,  
with the persistence of a humble searcher,  
the devotion of a *bhakta*,  
and the unerring eye of a connoisseur of novelty in forms.  
And we join hands to him in worship.

He is a modest little man.  
His light frame, clad simply in kurta-dhoti,  
is vibrant even at his advanced age,  
as he leads you to a new acquisition.  
His eyes light up with joy  
at his own discoveries.





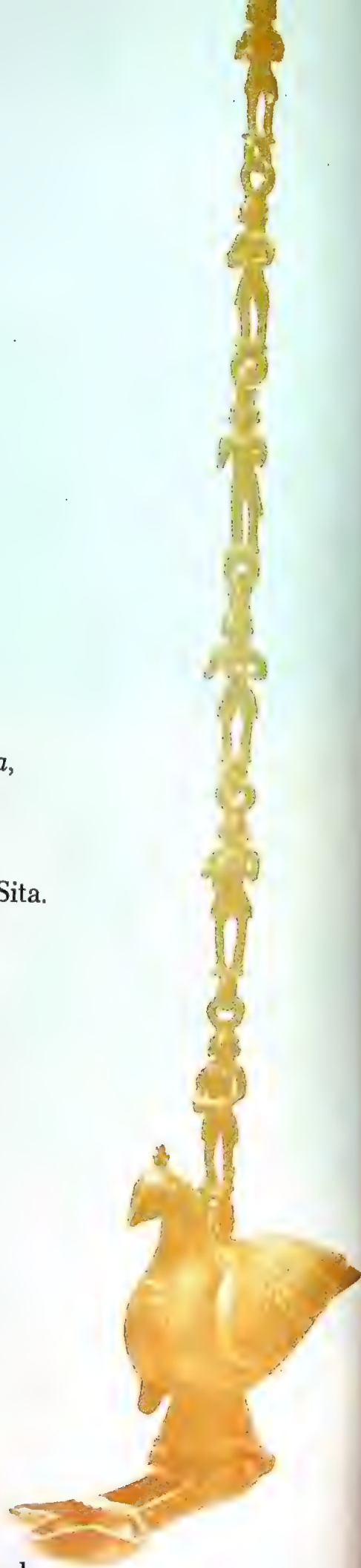
He mutters the name of the place  
where he found a particular Durga.  
Impetuously, he shows another figurine in clay  
which he picked up in some fair.  
And before we have taken the object in,  
he points to a wild toy horse  
brought from a ruined palace nursery.  
Seeing the sense of wonder in our eyes,  
he sits us down on a carved settee,  
brought from some old Parsi home.  
And while a furtive movement  
brings his demure, kindly and gentle spouse  
with cups of tea and something to eat,  
he opens a packet of Paithan Paintings of *Ramayana*,  
in which we recognise the puppet shapes of Andhra  
transformed by the Maharashtrian craftsmen  
into a sturdy Rama  
and more than demoniac Ravana and a gazelle-like Sita.  
Before we have finished absorbing this set,  
he shows us a vision in glass painting  
of the lovely Mastani Begum  
done in the Karnatak style.  
As we wish to absorb all that we have seen,  
we stop looking, drink the tea and ask the question  
which everyone asks:

'How did you get all these things?'

He evades the answer and says:  
'I have a free Railway Pass.  
I am going to Kutch tomorrow  
— next Friday, I will be in Hyderabad.  
At the end of the week, I shall be in Tamil Nadu.  
Back home in a truck,  
which is being sent by a generous patron!'

We come away bent-headed,  
with love and admiration for him in our hearts.

And, in retrospect, we feel reassured that,  
in spite of the restless, grasping, unhappy world around us  
there is, in our midst,  
a haven where this pioneer, and ardent pilgrim,  
Dinkar Kelkar, has 'shored the remnants' of our people's culture  
against our ruin —  
in one of the richest museums of folk art in the world.





# The House

In the every-day life of our land, our people tried to create a whole full day against the torpor and ennui of routine, by evolving a ritual in which every act became holy. This was sanctified by the proverbial wisdom of the folk in the saying:

*'The owls sleep through day and night  
while the lark sings. . .'*

This practice of *creating* a whole day may have had its sanctions in the daily ritual magic of early man, who had to eke out a living out of nature, when he had to beckon his will to cast a spell on the bison to be hunted, by drawing the picture of the hunt and shrieking incantations in front of it before going out to kill. And the Vedic prayers to the sun, the sky, and the invocations for the grant of this, that, or the other boon, in the *Atharva Veda*, were urged by man's recognition that, in this vast universe, a comparatively small animal, only recently evolved into walking on two legs, talking, wishing and hoping against despair, could achieve the good life by making magic, using amulets and other protections against evil and performing ceremonies to appease the Gods.

So in the *Gṛhst*, family life, almost every waking hour has been ennobled by uplifting the heart, by releasing the rhythms of the body-soul against the physical perils, influences of weather and fluctuations of moods, by inspiring each person to higher rhythms.

In fact, living, working, leisure and recreation, were all governed by the recognition of the fact that our various moods reflect our body-soul rhythms.

Thus the cave was chosen to ensure privacy and to imbibe the good air through the big opening and to be near the food to be gathered.

The thatched hut was constructed against the heat and the cold, while the body was exposed to the refreshing elements during work in the fields in the stage of civilisation when food-gathering gave place to agriculture. The house, made of wood and brick and straw, was made when the needs grew and more pliable materials were secured.

The haveli of the family, which acquired more worldly goods, was elaborated into various functional compartments for the family of many members.

The palace was more complex insofar as it housed the Raja, who claimed to have divine powers by virtue of his physical prowess, martial abilities and mental capacity for organising defence, public works and the rule of law.

The inner sanctum of the temple was always modelled on the peasant's hut, only being constructed in more permanent materials, of wood, or stone, or brick, or rock-cut, for the sacred purpose.

In the house, which was as much the body and soul of god as the shrine, the divinity was put in the alcove. Prayers had to be made to the symbolic presence of the unknown powers for blessings every morning.

These divinities multiplied in time, till they came to constitute a pantheon of nature powers, and later became symbols of every energy and rhythmic splendour.

Each family, sometimes a whole village, and often a whole kingdom, worshipped a common favourite deity.

In the life of habit, in the ritual of daily existence, it was thus—each to his own body-soul rhythm, individual and yet part of the family, the community and the kingdom. The balance was always uneasy. And yet certain important values were observed as an unwritten code of conduct which preferred civilisation to barbarism.







Dimly aware of the invisible rhythms, which receive the impact of the outer phenomena, the transformation of life begins by cultivating those habits which may awaken us to awareness. This is a kind of *karma*, or evolution or interaction, which is supposed to renew the personality every day.

The *junglepani*, or the walk in the heart of nature, to intake the fresh odour of dew, is the beginning of the day's yoga.

The bath in the running water, which has washed seven rocks, closes the pores, later to be opened by brisk scrubbing.

The songs, recited by men and women during and after the ablutions, are supposed to create the mood for exalting the body-soul above the elements.

The Shehnai strains, released in the early morning, are said to create the resonance in the deepest depths.

The lotus of the soul, which has been closed in sleep all night, begins to open with the day.

The symbol of this awakening, in painted images, is the female goddess Saraswati, who sits on the open lotus playing the Veena and beckoning all creation to listen. The atmosphere is charged by the sky with red streaks of the morning and the enlivening greens, and the quickenings of birds, beasts and flowers.

The prayers before the mandala, with the muttering of a favourite hymn, unconsciously urges acceptance of earth, water, fire and air, even as the personality is energised.

Not many habitual prayer-makers realise that the Brahmins had mythified evolution: Man has evolved from the boar, the lion, to the peasant and the God King Rama, by dint of the heightened consciousness. And most human beings are supposed to be aware of the need to grow through the cycle of days and nights, by the inhale of breath, through deliberate physical and mental exercises, specially putting the deeper life-breath from the air into themselves. Their eyes are supposed to glisten, the thousand petals of the brain are supposed to open up, and the juices of the body are said to flow.

Of course, the vast majority of men and women have made their own shorthand ritual and substituted worship of work for prayer.

Work as worship started by daubing the tools with the sacred saffron mark. The plough was so sanctified, as well as the bullock's forehead. The handle of the hammer had a sacred tassel tied to it. There was a ceremony for the sanctification of the pen and inkpot. The coconut had to be broken on the wheel of the bullock-cart before it was plied for the first time. The sword was annointed before warriors went to the battlefield. The elephants were decorated before they joined the battle army. The white horse of the General had a *tikka* put on his forehead, before the Commander led the army. The hands were joined to the image of Ganesha on top of the doorway of the shop before buying and selling could begin. The musical instruments were blessed before being played. The dancer touched the guru's feet before beginning to dance. In fact, everything was made holy to give depth to the creative life.

During the leisure hours the deepening was through song and dance and play. The source of magic was supposed to lie in the first inspired utterance, *Sruti*—the inspiration given by God. The dance was the *katha* (rational) of a myth about the ripening of the harvest, and thus, originally, an invocation to the Gods. The prologue of the play was to appease the divinity.

In actual practice the religious motif became ritualistic habit, or maybe secular impulse, informed by dim awareness of the original inspiration given by the gods. And all creations tended to become decorations.

2. A section of the house and Museum of Shri Dinkar Kelkar with wood-work transplanted from the original Mahal of Mastani Begum, near Pune.



The decoration of every object involved the assimilation of nature forces. The tree itself became the symbol of life. The flowers entered into the design of cloth, woodwork and metal. Shrubberies became lyrical foliage patterns. Birds, specially the parrot, as the imitator of human voice, with the lyrical grace of its form, entered into floral patterns. The snake or *naga*, which has been worshipped as the sinuous curvacious flow of the soul, was incarnated in stone, woodwork and fabric. The lion, as the king of the jungle, represented the majestic power of the monarch. The fish was the image of fertility. The elephant was wisdom personified. The horse was speed itself. The peacock was the acme of joy, as it spread its tail in a graceful display of the many-coloured fan of its feathers.

All the utilities, the fundamental objects, and purposive acts of creation, became artefacts in the hands of the craftsmen, made with the aspiration to the highest skill.

Vishwakarma was the God of the artisans. And to attain the perfection of handiwork, as this legendary deity had done, was the consciously accepted ideal. The work of art was supposed already to have been revealed by him. The craftsmen only had to discover it. This myth was always present in the consciousness of the brotherhoods of handicraft workers. Not all of them, however, succeeded in becoming gods and discovering the revelation. But a sufficient number of them, with unique talents, were able to create shapes and designs of such intricate workmanship and fantasy that they seem to be inspired by the dream life in which the gods have talked to them.

For instance, why a Ganesha image prescribed by iconography, to be in a certain stance, should appear in other stances than the prescribed form, cannot be understood without conceding individual talent. And the skill which has gone to the modelling, the casting, and the ultimate shaping of images, cannot be attributed to Vishwakarma, except in a metaphorical sense. It is likely that, within the framework of tradition, the artisan lived a secular life, in which he learnt technique from the father who passed it on to the son. And, most of the time, it was the daring craftsman who, presuming that he had inherited the known forms, created new shapes by giving the twist and turn, which his own genius inspired. And the cleverest innovator was thus given the title of *Guru*, and attracted more apprentices, who were not necessarily his sons but other people's sons.

The fantasy and the skill which gave a bird-shape to a vegetable cutter, the transformation of a fish into the proportions of a pitcher using the open mouth to pour water, the giving of an elaborate handle to the pumice stone and other marvellous inventions, which make the objects of every-day use into new art forms, are startling phenomena, right in the heart of the conventional societies. Many of these things made for village homes anticipate works of art of the modern constructivists, the futurists, and the abstractionists of the West, by a few centuries. The difference is that while the modernist works of art are for contemplation by a few, the outstanding designs of the past were used in daily life of the many.

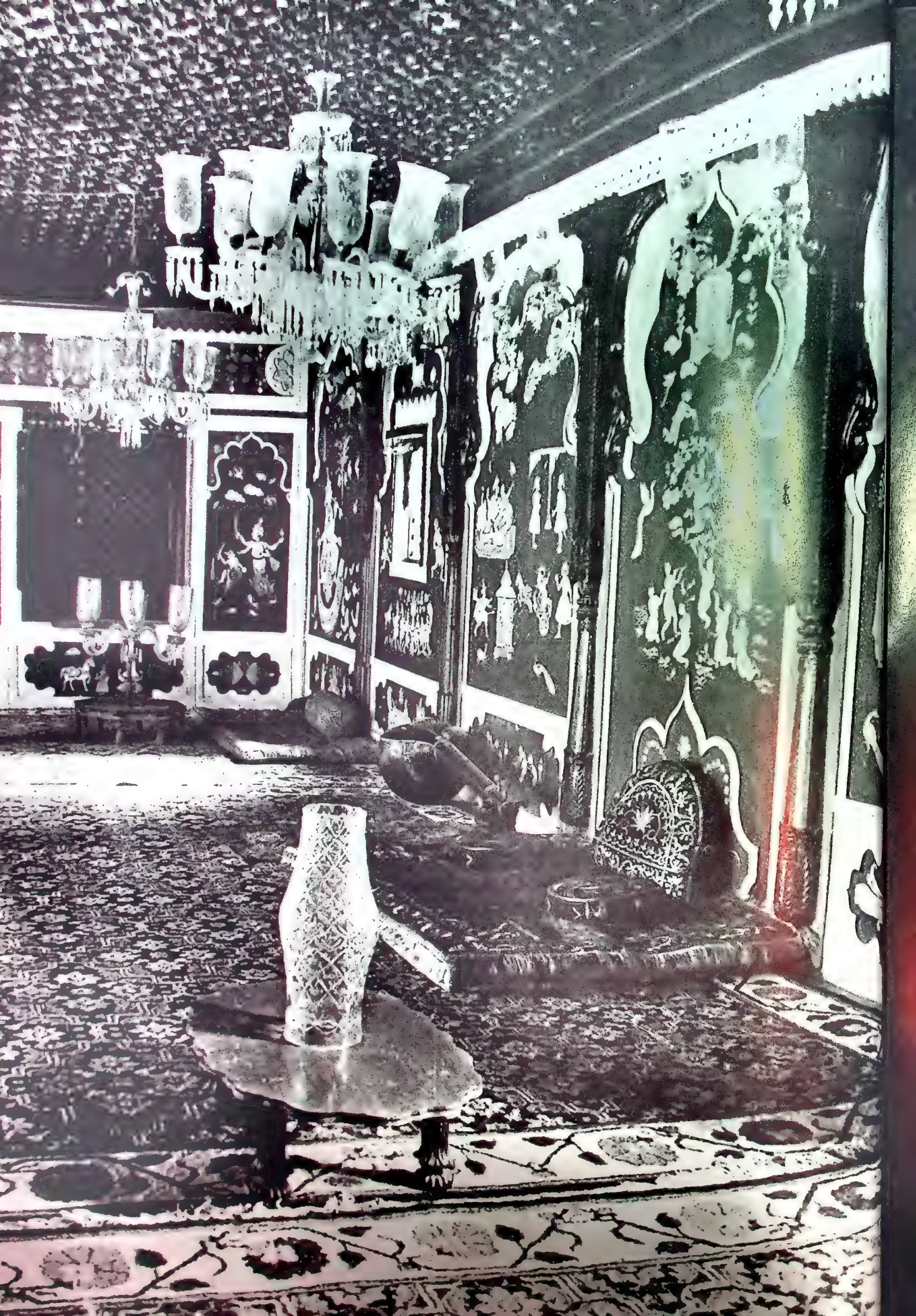
— MULK RAJ ANAND

3. An ingeniously carved wooden door with ivory inlay in the uppermost lintel-frame. Talegaon, near Pune, Maharashtra, c. 19th century.

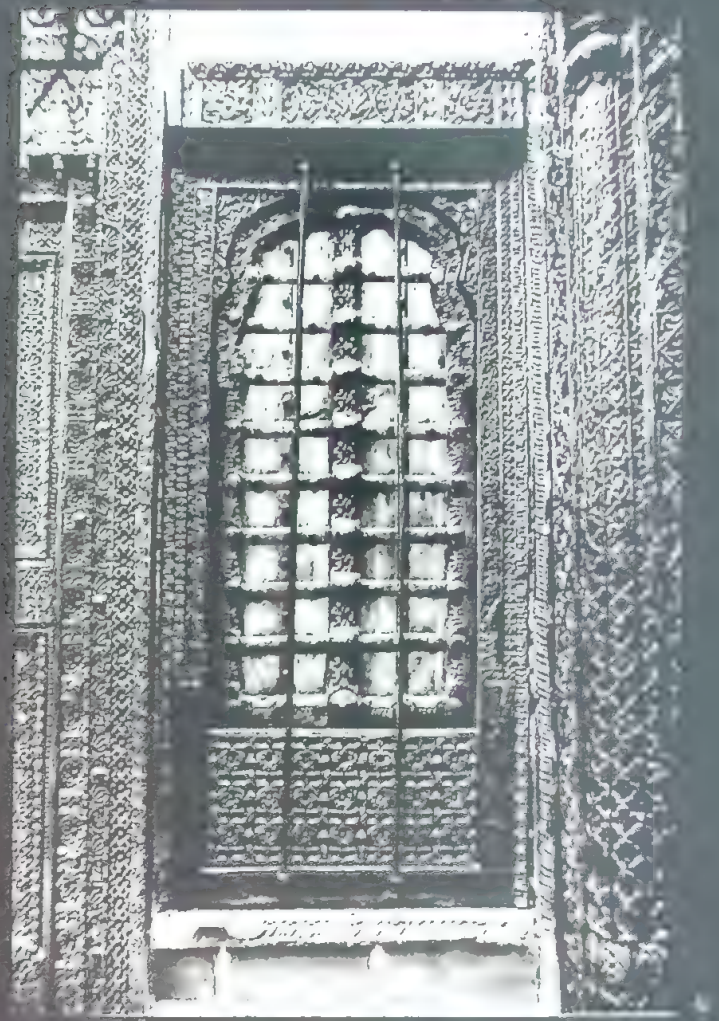












4. *Resplendent interior of Diwan of Mastani Mahal.*
5. *Mahārashtrian Madonna and child in wood, c. 19th century.*
6. *Exquisitely carved window of a Rajasthani house with ornate carving, c. 19th century.*





7. Heightened moment of the music recital.  
(photo Lance Dane)
8. A Sitar incarnates itself in the fantasy form of a peacock.





## Music

*The Shehnai strains,  
released in the  
early morning,  
are said to create  
the resonance in the  
deepest depths.*





# Toilet



9. After the bath—a look in the mirror.  
10. Vajri, a foot scrubber of brass with four peacocks picking grains in the centre. Maharashtra, c. early 20th century.  
11. A deer-shaped hair-drying pin of brass. Kerala, c. 19th century.





12. A colourful chaitra-gauri pata, a painted cloth panel in honour of goddess Gauri worshipped during the month of Chaitra.  
Maharashtra, c. 19th century.







## Cooking



14

17

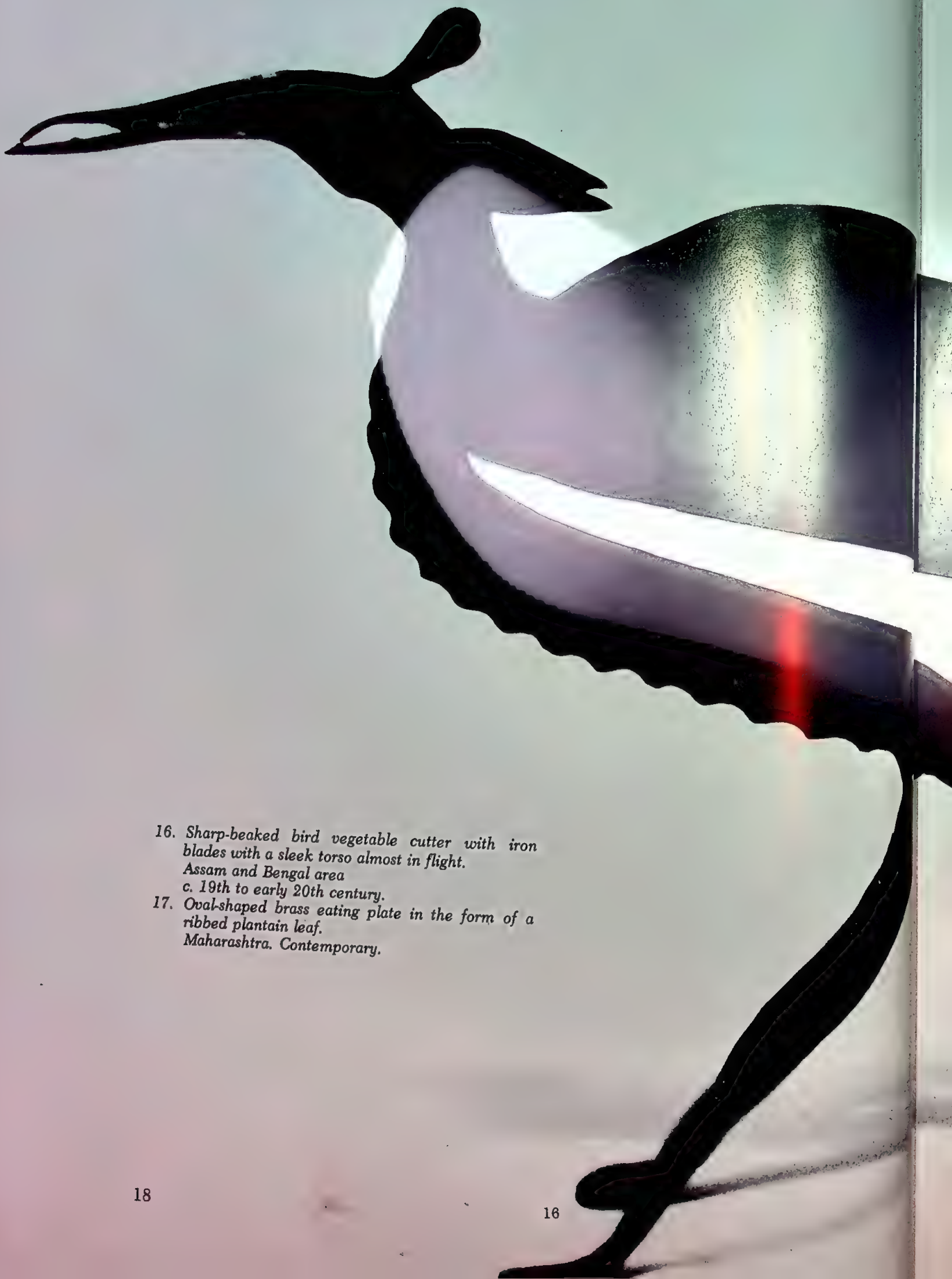
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13. An oil lamp with a fantasy form of Saraswati turned into a peacock.

15. A vegetable cutter with wooden base and a peacock-shaped iron blade with twist and turn of the body symbolising energy.

14. Radha in the kitchen.





16. Sharp-beaked bird vegetable cutter with iron blades with a sleek torso almost in flight. Assam and Bengal area c. 19th to early 20th century.
17. Oval-shaped brass eating plate in the form of a ribbed plantain leaf. Maharashtra. Contemporary.









18. Box, for condiments, in the form of peacock with sliding lids  
Rajasthan, c. early 20th century.
19. Carved wooden spoon hangers  
South India, c. early 20th century.
20. Detail of a fantasy lid of a brass box with a shapely face of a woman, surrounded by ovoid female faces  
Bengal, c. 19th century.











23



◀ 21. A highly decorative copper and brass pot with embossed inlay work.  
Benaras, c. 19th century.

22. Woman writing a love letter.

22



24



23. Ink well of brass in the form of a wine cup with pagoda-like lid and silver chain  
Andhra Pradesh, late 19th century.  
24. A flattened globular melon-shaped ink well of brass with a peacock-cap tied with a chain and an attached long pen case.  
Gujarat c. 19th century.

23







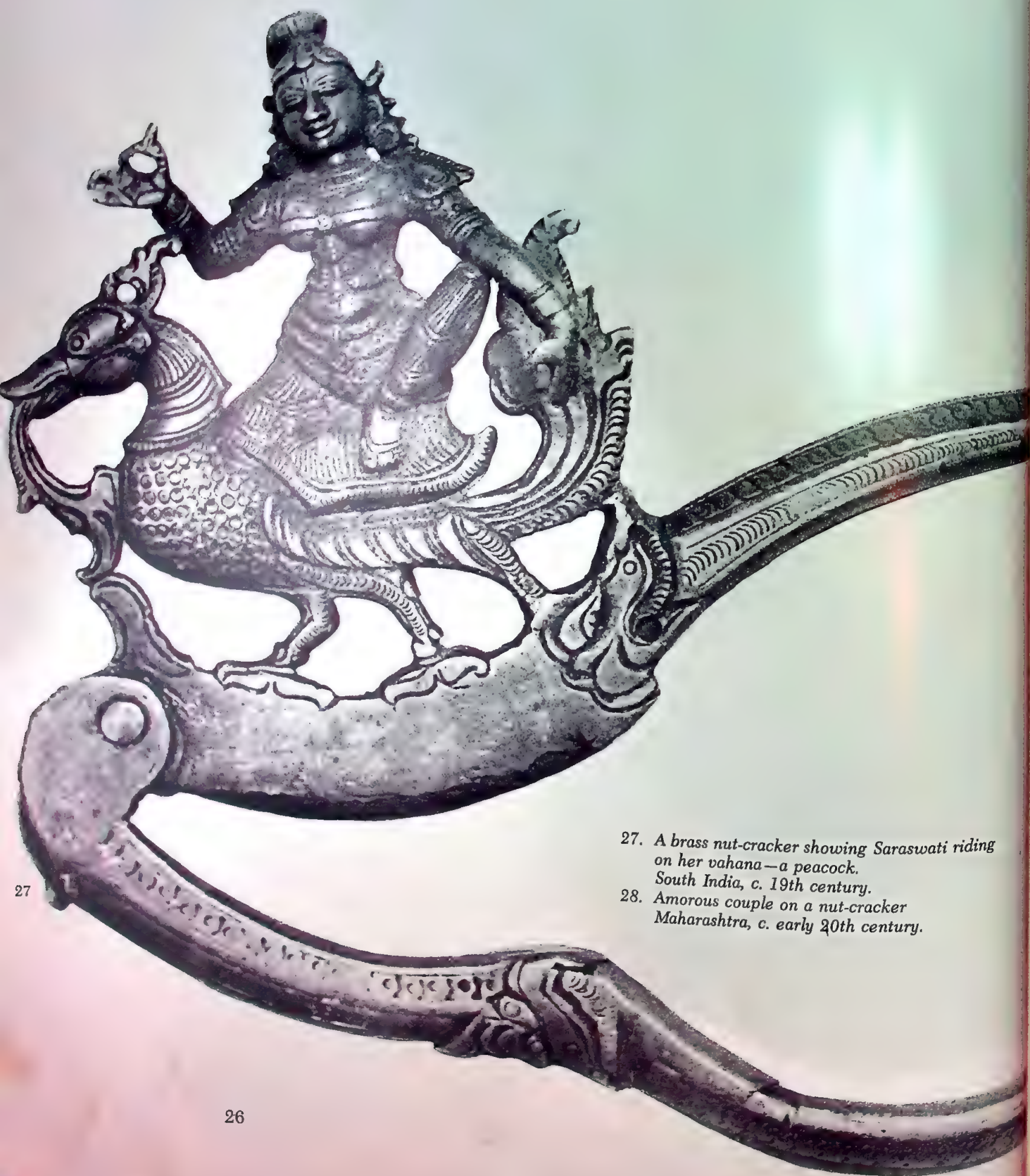


*During the leisure hours  
the deepening  
was through  
song, and dance and play.*



25. Offering of pan. Detail from a Maratha painting.
26. Beautifully designed betel box in the form of a fish with wheels underneath.





27. A brass nut-cracker showing Saraswati riding on her vahana—a peacock. South India, c. 19th century.
28. Amorous couple on a nut-cracker Maharashtra, c. early 20th century.









29



30



31



32



28

- 29. Nut-cracker conceived as the mother facing a child.
- 30. Here man and woman are balanced in the poise of love.
- 31. Fantasy bird flying off in sharp flight like the sound of nut's cracking.
- 32. Man and woman riding a horse conceived as a flying spirit.
- 33. Nut-cracker with engraved floral design in bidri work—probably from Bidar.





34. The Nayak and Nayika exchange pans to initiate love play. Maratha painting.





35



35. Raja Rani playing chaupat.  
The Game of Chaupat.

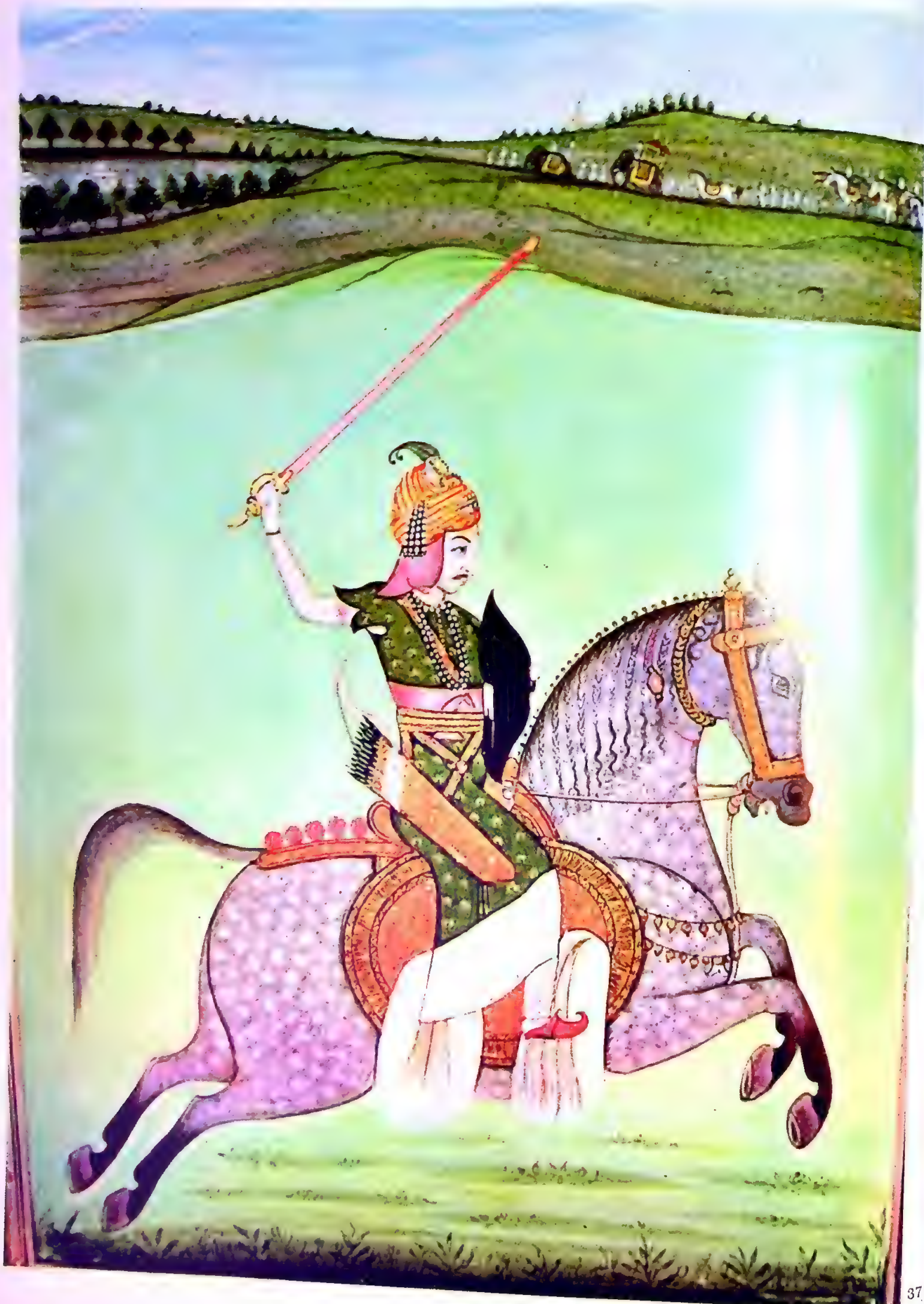




36

36 Detail of Ravana's heads with wild big eyes and raised sword in hand.





37. The heroic Baji Rao Peshwa.  
38. The heroine of the romance of Baji Rao, the seductive Mastani Begum, daughter of the Maharaja of Rohil Khand by his Muslim concubine, who fell in love with the Peshwa at first sight.









39. Sadashiv Rao Bhau—nephew of the Peshwa, who commanded the large Maratha army.





44. Sita urges Laxman to rush to Rama's help. Laxman senses the trick of the demon and assures Sita that Rama will kill the demon and return safely. Sita scolds Laxman and flings false charges at Laxman that he has an eye on her and he wishes his brother's death. Aggrieved, Laxman agrees to go but draws a semicircle before the hut and tells Sita not to cross it.
45. Immediately Ravana, in the garb of an ascetic approaches Sita and begs for alms. Feigning fear of the wild animals protecting her, he urges her to come out and give the alms. Sita forgets Laxman's warning and crosses the semicircle.
46. Ravana scoops the earth on which Sita is standing and making her seat in a wooden palanquin, flies away.
47. But on his way he is accosted by Jatayu, the brother of Garuda, and a family friend of Rama. Ravana kills Jatayu and brings Sita to Lanka. He keeps her in Ashokavana, guarded by ferocious demon women.











52. Montage relief of a Raja smoking hookah.





53. *Narasingha, used by the sadhus to invoke the gods with the sound which penetrates the heavens.*
54. *Kinnari: The three pumpkin forms make the base of kinnari with the bird flying off shrilly like the soul of the folk song.*
55. *Detail of a silver tray.*











63



64



65

63. Terracotta Chilams with four and five bowls for smoking different ingredients at one time.
64. Base of a hookah in form of a peacock.
65. Symbolic linear bird uplifts the static base of the hookah.
- 66,67. Bidri work engraved on the base of the hookah in a floral design. Hyderabad, c. early 29th century.











When I was occupied with my search for art objects I often received financial assistance, in difficult times, from friends, among whom the most prominent are my brother, Dr. Bhaskarrao and my mother. Since they are from my own family, they may not wish to have their names mentioned, but I cannot forget the help they gave me. And on this occasion, I must not also forget to mention my friend from Bombay, Abdur Qadar Isaji, who gave me understanding of antiquities.

To my memory also comes the name of Dadasaheb and Smt. Sushilaben Maulankar, without whose moral and material help this Museum would not have come into existence.

I have already said that I do not like to look back. I do not want to stop the race that I am running. Now I have entered 83<sup>rd</sup> year of my life. In a way, I am aware of this, in a way I ignore the fact. Actually, I have forgotten my age already earlier. The most powerful One is helping me in all that I do.

There is a big bundle of experiences on my back but I am putting the past behind. Now I hope that everything will go smoothly. Whatever money is required, will be available from generous friends. The Museum is no longer MY Museum. I have donated it to the Government of Maharashtra and it is the Government's responsibility. But while handing it over to the Government, I felt that it is essential to reorganise it. The display should be improved. And we have to collect more objects. If we will not assemble the art objects of our country, who will do it? Already we see to our shame that if one wants to study the art of our country, one has to go abroad because many artefacts have been smuggled out.

When I thought of reorganisation, I was not sure that the Government can solve this problem. To renovate this Museum I was in need of two and a half lakhs of rupees. One fine morning, I decided to go to Shri Shantanurao Kirloskar, the renowned industrialist of Pune. He treated me with respect. I requested him to donate fifty thousand rupees. And what a pleasant surprise!! On the afternoon of the same day I received a cheque for that amount. His wife, Smt. Yamun Bai,

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must have also played a role in this. After this auspicious beginning, I have received two lakhs more. Other well-wishers are offering money. And before long this Museum will become a living monument of my dreams.

I have received help from many friends from among whom I may mention Shri Rahul Kumar Bajaj, Shri H. K. and A. N. Firodia, Shri Madhavrao Apte, Shri O. C. and A. C. Agashe, as well as Shri G. M. and Smt. Mangalabai Abhyankar, and Shri and Smt. Kantibhai Shroff. Smt. Abhyankar and Shri Shroff treat me as their family member. I want to finish the work of extending the Museum quickly. I cannot afford to waste a second. And I am sure the funds will come.

I have a desire to establish an unparalleled Museum pertaining to women of India, in which there should also be a Research Institute. In this, every article should concern women, and it should be created by women. I often feel that women do better work than men in India. The administration of this Museum should also be in the hands of women. In this Museum, I want to evoke the ethos of every part of our country. I shall spare no pains to achieve this.

Also, I want to make two more galleries. All this is not idle dreaming. This is a plan to be initiated immediately. I have thought over this. The first gallery will be of Tribal art. Artefacts from various tribal communities will be assembled here. I have already begun to collect these. The second gallery will be Folk Arts. In this I shall not be able to display everything from the whole of India, but I shall present at least the most important things.

I love Terracottas. So there will be a gallery entirely devoted to Terracottas.

Another favourite of mine is the puppets. In various parts of India there are leather puppets. Some of these I have already collected. I am looking for more.

I have also collected embroideries and I am aspiring to collect more from the various parts of the country.

Indoor games is another theme, especially playing cards, various brain-teasing games, and dolls from Karwar and Konkan areas.



I have various types of smoking pipes and I am daily adding to these.

To enlarge the Museum I need money and land, but I am sure it will come.

I hope my work will make a contribution to the recognition of the beauties and wonders of our culture by showing the art of everyday life of our land.

In many respects this work is for educating the people. The realisation of the importance of the Museum for education will come much later. Outside India, Museums are almost holy shrines. There, the wealthy people constantly help by donating art objects.

By devoting a special issue of MARG to this Museum, Dr. Mulk Raj Anand has assigned me a high status. He has honoured my efforts and achievements. The scholarly study of the objects of my Museum and the writing of the monograph on them has been undertaken by my dear young friends, Dr. Jyotindra Jain and his learned wife, Ms. Jutta Jain. They are both ardent young scholars of their subjects. I am indebted to them for their contribution and feel happy and proud to see our children inherit the only legacy I can leave behind for them.

Shantanurao Kirloskar is publishing a beautiful colour Catalogue of the Museum, and I am very grateful to him for helping me in all my difficulties.

Everyone likes roses, but not the thorns. People like to have a garden of fruits and flowers, but few want to be gardeners who have to work hard. Keeping a single aim in life, I have been going ahead in life, and I have always avoided telling the story of my struggles. I am not interested in discussing the difficulties, miseries and insults that came my way. I have lit an everlasting incense stick. I want people to enjoy the perfume. That is my only wish.

Lately, the University of Bombay has honoured me by prescribing my poetry collection, "The Poetry of the Unknown" for the B. A. syllabus. The Museum Association of India has elected me as their honorary fellow. And now the Pune

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Raja Dinkar  
trata of the  
eatures and  
śa, Natarāja,

in the icons  
near his feet,  
a mouse, in



University has conferred on me the degree of D. Litt.  
(Honoris causa). I appreciate these honours, because  
I know that, in the end, devoted labours are recognised.

When I sit in a relaxed mood, one thought comes to  
my mind, that, in the last fifty or sixty years, I have gathered  
many things and made a large collection. The collection  
has grown slowly. And from my assemblage, a show-place  
has come to be. But whatever things I have, and by seeing  
which connoisseurs open their eyes wide, are all the  
work of those many craftsmen who have been neglected and  
forgotten. Having created these objects, they have merged with  
the Unknown. If they had not created these things, how  
could I have erected this wonder-house? But I know  
their souls are dwelling in these very objects of art.  
And I bow to them with reverence.

This whole effort at reminiscence, this jumble of  
stray words has arisen like a poem from within me. I feel  
I have always been writing a long narrative poem to  
fill my life with the fragrances of the past.

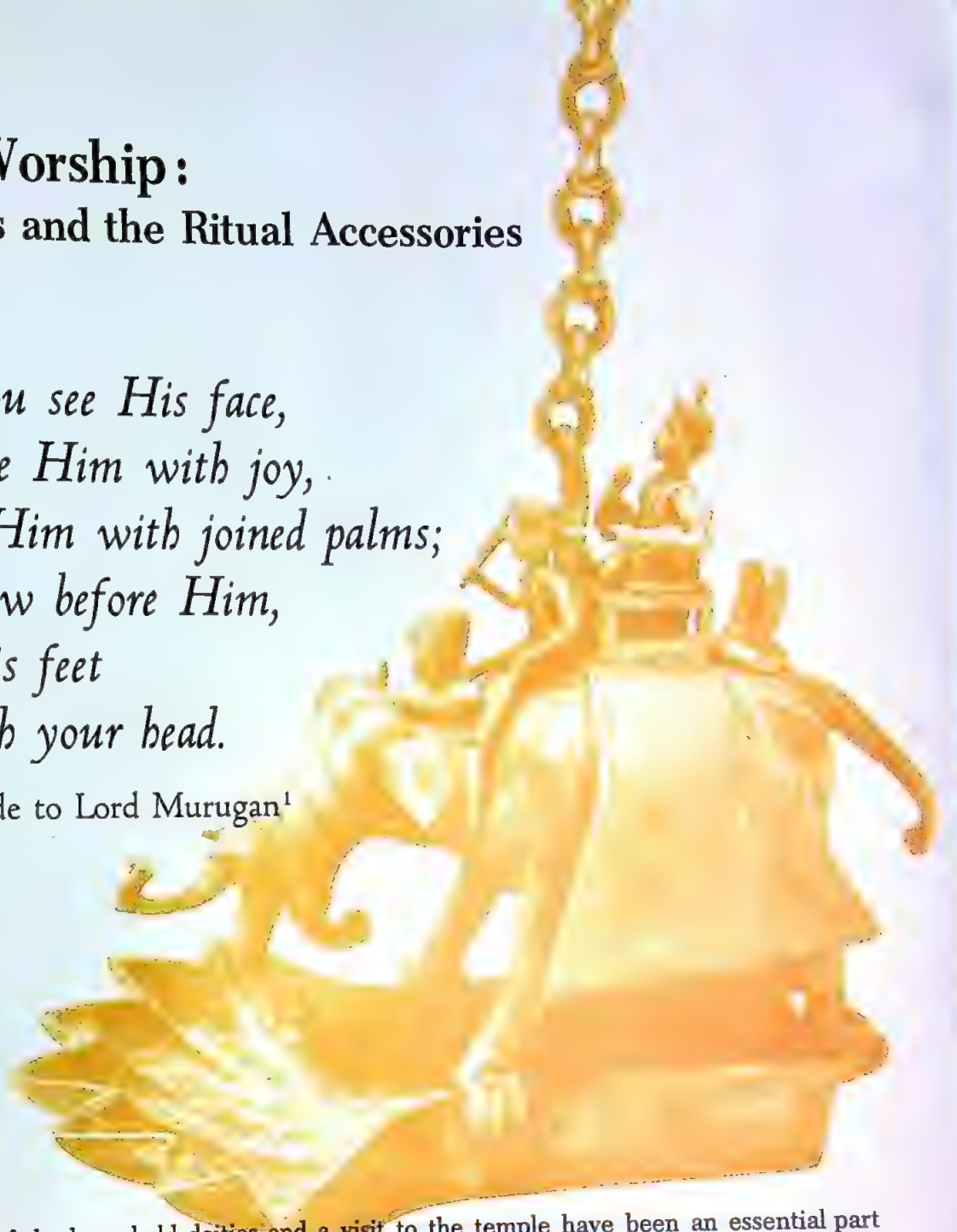
Sankar Gangadhar Kulkar



## Daily Worship: The Icons and the Ritual Accessories

*'When you see His face,  
praise Him with joy,  
worship Him with joined palms;  
bow before Him,  
so that his feet  
touch your head.*

Guide to Lord Murugan<sup>1</sup>



Daily worship of the household deities and a visit to the temple have been an essential part of the every-day life. In the system of *varnāśramadharma* all duties are held equally sacred. For a Hindu woman perhaps the involvement behind the act of cleaning the images, giving them a bath, anointing them with perfume, decorating them with flowers, etc. is not very different from taking care of her child or husband. If one thinks of the sixteen manners in which *Vaiṣṇavas* worship Kṛṣṇa, one finds that the ritual acts of waking him up, changing his clothes, offering him food and toys, swinging him in a cradle, etc. are only the ritual extensions of the secular activities of daily life of rural India. For this reason the rural iconography is interestingly coloured with local customs, beliefs and practices of every-day life. It is likely that the standardised Hindu iconography of the prescriptions of the *śāstra* also must have incorporated in the years of its infancy the elements of the indigenous cults.

Apart from the standard examples of the copper and brass images of a thirteenth century Siva Nandiśvara, a sixteenth century Lakṣmī and a Mahiṣasuramardīnī, a seventeenth century Naṭarāja and a Veṇu Gopāla and an eighteenth century Gaṇeśa, in the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum there is a hoard of small images springing from the rural strata of the society which provides an interesting study of combination of local religious features and the standard iconography of *śilpaśāstric* prescriptions. These images include Gaṇeśa, Naṭarāja, Bhairava, Varāha, Garuḍa, Narasimha, Hanumān, etc.

Of all these icons Gaṇeśa is the most popular deity of Maharashtra. However, in the icons of the whole country his *vāhana*, the mouse, is placed almost insignificantly near his feet, whereas here in several Maharashtrian folk images Gaṇeśa is shown riding a mouse, in which the mouse tends to become much larger than Gaṇeśa himself.



A remarkable aspect of these folk images is the reflection of local costumes and headgears. In one image Gaṇeśa and Kārtikeya, the two sons of Śiva, are shown seated on the lap of Śiva, in which the latter is shown wearing a conical Maratha cap or turban. One interesting image is that of dancing Gaṇeśa, in which the entire conception is exactly as in the iconography of Śiva Nāṭarāja.

Several images of Bālakṛṣṇa also springing from Maharashtra show the child Kṛṣṇa wearing either a Peshwa turban or a European hat. A two-armed solid casted Gaṇeśa from Nepal is shown wearing the *dhoti* with local Nepali broad ornate border.

Another remarkable group in the series is that of the images of a four-armed standing goddess killing a demon who is half issuing from a cylindrical part of the body of a buffalo whose decapitated head lies on the pedestal. These images rather belong to and derive their inspiration from the local cults of the goddess killing a demon in which the standard Puranic story of Mahīśāsuramardīnī is not always in the centre. In most of the local *mahātmyās* the names of the goddesses and the demons and the entire theme are different from the standard Sanskrit version. May be these hundreds of local versions and their related icons have provided material to the evolution of the Hindu concept of Mahīśāsuramardīnī.

The casting of the images is marked by such characteristics as protruding eyes, simplified limb forms and details of features and ornamentation, extraneously applied as in terracotta.

Related with the worship of the deities are the various ritual accessories. It is obvious that if the man needs a simple spoon, the gods need an ornate one, if man bathes with a simple pot, god bathes with a precious one. The most important of the ritual accessories are the lamps, the containers for water, flowers, perfume, scented powder, sandal paste and saffron, ritual spoons and ladles, bells, etc. A beautiful range of such accessories of worship are displayed in this Museum.

Of these the *acamani* (sanskrit) or *sandhye ci pali* (Marathi), a ritual spoon of brass is often made with great ornamentation. The spoon consists of a circular bowl to which a long handle is attached. The bowl is usually a plain hemisphere, but occasionally an ornately petalled flower cup. The handle is often heavily ornamented. In some cases the handle incorporates the image of a four-armed Viṣṇu, Kāliyādamana Kṛṣṇa, Seṣāyini Viṣṇu, Hanumān, and Nandi and snake, the two symbols of Śiva.

These spoons are used in household and temple rituals for symbolic purification with sacred water. For transferring ritual water from a bigger container to a smaller one, for sprinkling water, and for pouring *ghī* into the lamp or sacrificial fire the same spoons are used.

The pots used for various rituals are broadly of three types, namely, the cylindrical ones for storing ritual water for purification in daily worship, the broad-bellied and narrow-mouthed larger pots often having inlays of different metals or incisions of sacred scenes from mythology, for carrying holy water from sacred spots and those in the shape of a *kamaṇḍalu* or a conch having a pouring channel or a gargoyle often in the form of *gomukha*, a cow's head, for sacred bath. Of these pots the more remarkable ones are with a flouting belly which contain intricate incisions of the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu, of the *līlās* of Kṛṣṇa and of hunting scenes, floral designs and animal decorations.

1. Pattupattu, Tirumuruganarupadai, 285-90. quoted A. L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*. Fontana, 1971, p. 333





68. In the craftsman's fantasy all gods are energised, and the shape of the icon has changed frequently. Here, the Ganesha acquires many more arms and emblems than prescribed in the Shilpashastras. South India, 18th or 19th century.





69



69. *Harmonies of line and form here simplify the Ganesha image by abstracting detail — a unique Ganesha figure wearing a dhoti. Nepal, date unknown.*
70. *Ganesha dances in the craftsman's fantasy and almost assumes the form of Shiva. Benaras, c. 18th century.*



71. Krishna as Venugopala, dancing almost in the Shiva pose (Gujarat), and three bronze figures of Balakrishna (child Krishna) with Peshva turbans. Maharashtra, c. 19th century.







72



73

72. The highly charged fantasy of the craftsman here transforms the Varaha Avatar of Vishnu into a lover carrying Prithvi in his arms under the shadow of the hood of Seshnaga. Maharashtra, 18th or 19th century.

73. Even the spoon must become the god incarnate to be the vehicle of worship. The Supreme Vishnu here becomes the handle of a spoon. South India, c. early 20th century.



## The Light:

### Lamps of the Temple and the House

*He is Agni,  
the Lord of the Fire,  
He is the Sun and the  
Wind and the Moon,  
He is the Seed,  
the Immense Being,  
He is the Lord of Progeny.*

Śvetāśvatāra Upaniṣad<sup>1</sup>

74. A hanging oil lamp of brass with parrot  
suspended from a chain like a bird caught  
in flight.



74



Worship of fire must be as ancient as its discovery by mankind. The Vedic poets were still amazed by this great element and having conceived it as Agni, one of the highest deities, showered great eulogies in its praise. Agni in Vedic belief is not only a deity in its own right, but also a medium for carrying the sacrificial offerings to the gods, through the sacrificial fire. In Brahmanical and Hindu mythology, Agni is perceived as the fire in the hearths, as the power behind the thunderbolt (Indra), as the fire of the heavenly sphere (Sūrya), as all-pervading support of life (Vaiśvānara), as the eternal submarine fire (Vajrāgni) and as the fire of Immensity (Brahmāgni).

The lamp is a symbol of Sūrya and Agni and thus plays a very important role in the religious life of the Hindus. In a Brahmanic ritual handbook<sup>2</sup> the offering of a lamp is mentioned among the nine essential forms of worship. It is prescribed that one should kindle a lamp with a cotton wick or the one fed with clarified butter or sesame oil on the side (of the image). It further states that the lamps of the best class are eight *angula* high; those of medium class three *angula*; those of the lower class as high as allowed by the available material.

It is not that the lamps were only used for ritual purposes. Before the advent of electricity the oil lamps were widely used all over India for sacred as well as secular purposes. An oil lamp was as much required to illuminate the palace of the king as a remote hut in a village. It was an essential object for all classes of society and therefore an inexhaustible variety of lamps ranging from a simple earthen bowl to the most elaborately fashioned structure incorporating hundreds of lamp bowls in its design came into existence.

The largest single collection of various types of lamps of India is the one in the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum. It represents ancient and modern lamps, religious and domestic lamps, metallic, wooden, stone and terracotta lamps, standing lamps, swinging lamps, rolling lamps, tree lamps, *torāṇa* lamps, lamps with perforations, lamps with icons, lamps with parrots and peacocks, lamps in all conceivable shapes, sizes and designs.

For the sake of simplification the collection can be classified into such categories as the *ārati* lamps, the standing lamps and the hanging lamps and a few miscellaneous ones.

### Ārati Lamps

*Ārati* is an invocation of a deity done with the accompaniment of a lamp and music. In such a ceremony, the lamp is held in one or both the hands and waved repetitively in front of an image or any installation of a deity. Provision of a handle and an even base (to be able to place on the floor) are the two basic features of an *ārati* lamp. The *ārati* lamps are usually made of brass, but sometimes of other alloys or of copper or silver. An *ārati* lamp has sometimes one, but often multiple lamp bowls. The handle of such a lamp is sometimes in the shape of a simple curve, sometimes a creeper with flower and foliage, sometimes a cobra with multiple and expanded hoods, sometimes a peacock with elongated tail, sometimes embellished with a *nandi* or with the image of Khandoba, a Maharashtrian folk deity.

In some *ārati* lamps there is a single lamp bowl, but in most there are multiple cavities arranged in one straight line or in a semi-circle or in several tiers of rows of lamp bowls. The cavities are comparatively small, because the ritual of *ārati* lasts only a few minutes. In most *ārati* lamps the lamp bowls are attached to or are a part of a semi-circular tray, but occasionally these are attached to the figure of an elephant, a peacock, a cobra, etc. In some cases the lamp bowls are shown being carried by human or celestial figures.



## Standing Lamps

An average standing lamp consists of the central staff divided into several rims and tiers having a broad base and a lamp plate or a lamp bowl on top. The staff usually consists of combinations of bell-shaped or inverted bell-shaped parts, tapering tiers, balls, rims etc. In some cases lamp bowls or circular lamp plates with extended multiple wick channels are fixed to the stem of the lamp. Occasionally the stem of the standing lamp consists of a peacock or a parrot. In some cases when the lamp bowls are attached only to the stem somewhere in the middle, the lamp is crowned by a peacock, a parrot or a flower bud. In most cases a standing lamp is surmounted by a circular plate having multiple wick channels and oil cavities.

The Nepali lamps in the collection are often in the shape of a miniature temple having lamp bowls in all four directions.

In most cases the lamp plates containing *ghī* or oil are open, but in some cases the lamp is covered by a perforated lid with a crowning peacock so that the moths might not fall into the liquid.

A standing lamp described as 'teacher-pupil'<sup>3</sup> lamp is rather noteworthy in which to the lamp stand two lamp bowls are attached extending in two opposite directions and affixed at two different levels of height. The lamp is supposed to be used at the time of imparting instructions in which the teacher sits on the side of the higher lamp and student on that of the lower one.

The ornamentation of the stem of the standing lamps has led to the development of another class of lamps called *vrkṣadīpa*, or the tree-lamps. In such lamps ornate branches are shown shooting out from the tiers of the stem at a regular distance. Each branch culminates into a flower-shaped lamp plate, each of which contains several wicks. When fully lit, such a lamp gives a rich festive touch to the entire atmosphere of a temple or a house with its hundreds of small lights.

*Dīpikā* or *dīpalakṣmī* type of lamps form still another class of the standing lamps. Here the central stem of the lamp is replaced by a standing woman holding in both her hands a large lamp bowl. The lamp is in the form of a celestial attendant of light. A woman is considered to be the incarnation of *Śrī* or *Lakṣmī* and therefore the lamp in the form of a woman carrying light is, not surprisingly, designated in the popular terms as *dīpalakṣmī*, or *Lakṣmī* with a lamp. In some rare cases, the woman is shown standing over an elephant base. Occasionally the lamp is in the form of a dancing woman holding a lamp in one hand.

*Dīpalakṣmī* are more popular in Gujarat, Rajasthan, the Deccan and the South and are distinguishable from each other from the type of female costumes. Gujarat and Rajasthan *dīpalakṣmīs* wear a short blouse and a broad skirt, whereas those of the Deccan and the South are shown wearing a *sārī* or a skirt, rather tight-fitting to the lower body and often pulled between the legs as is the custom in these areas.

In the context of *dīpalakṣmī* lamps a mention must be made of the exclusively South Indian *gajalakṣmī* lamps in which a part of the periphery of the lamp bowl rises to become an arch enshrining the seated figure of *Lakṣmī* being annointed by elephants



## Hanging Lamps

An entire class of lamps to be suspended from the ceiling seems to have been very popular from early times. Such lamps are in the form of an ornate lamp bowl at the bottom and a chain above. The lamp bowl itself is sometimes an ornate cup embellished with an arch decorated with flowers and birds (Nepal), or in the form of a square or circular wick plate (or bowl) surmounted by a huge metal *cakra*, a wheel, with flames issuing from the rim (South India), or just a hollow figure of a bird with a wick channel either issuing from the head (Orissa, Madhya Pradesh), or from a cup placed underneath the bird. Often the hollow bird is used as the oil bottle which releases oil into the lamp bowl which is placed just underneath the bird (Gujarat, Rajasthan).

In some cases of more elaborate hanging lamps the massive lamp chain is intercepted at every short distance by a lamp in the shape of a bird or a *dīpalakṣmī*.

The above types of lamps with prominent human and animal figures are prohibited in Islam. The Islamic mosque lamps are usually constructed from perforated sheets of brass. These are very much reminiscent of Islamic architecture involving perforated arches, screen walls and pointed domes. Such lamps are rather large and hollow. Inside this large vessel of the lamp, a lamp bowl with the burning wick is placed. When lit, the light filters through the decorative perforations and imparts a magnificent look, not only to the lamp, but also to the walls, the ceiling and the floor which are dotted by the shade and light created by the perforations. These lamps are suspended from the ceilings with multiple delicate chains.

## Miscellaneous lamps

Some lamps are devised specially for a certain sectarian group or a worshipper in which case the image of a certain deity such as Ganeśa, Hanumān, Śiva, Viṣṇu are incorporated in any of the parts of the lamp. Sometimes mobile lamps are created by attaching wheels at the base of the lamp-construction. There are some examples of ball-shaped rolling lamps with perforations using a gyroscopic contrivance which keeps the burning wick inside the lamp always in an upright position.

Wooden lamps with adjustable angle or height are particularly common in Gujarat. Bracket lamps with the figures of peacocks, parrots, or lions or dolls, have a rotating device in which the angle of the lamp can be changed upto 180 degrees.

Similarly lamps with changeable height are devised in which the length of the lamp stem is adjusted by pulling upwards a stick construction holding a wooden lamp plate or lamp bowls.

In this collection there is a beautiful *garbi* lamp. *Garbi* is another type of wooden lamp of Gujarat which deserves a mention here. It is in the form of a small shrine or a tree holding lamp bowls on all sides and is placed in the centre of a group dance performed in honour of the goddess.

In South India there exist large arched gateways of metal surmounted by a *kīrtimukha*, the "face of glory", shaped as a lion's face, and embellished all over by small lamp bowls.

## NOTES:

—JYOTINDRA JAIN

1. Śvetāśvatara Upanisad IV, 1.2, quoted A. Danielou, *Hindu Polytheism*, London, 1964, front page
2. Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom, op. cit. p. 213
3. D. G. Kelkar, *Lamps of India*, Delhi, 1961.

75. Surya lamp of brass enshrines the vitality of the Sun-God in this intricately carved image. The image of Surya, the Sun-God is flanked by his two consorts riding a chariot with a row of seven horses and of twelve horses below. In the lower row, each horse carries a lamp over its head. Nepal, 18th century.













76. Highly ingenious image of Ganesha cast with a halo of flower frames. The rat vahana below and the lions on the sides on a leaf-shaped pedestal hold the oil to burn the wick with. Nepal, c. 19th century.
77. The rat vahana of Ganesha is honoured in its own right in this symbolic lamp with many hollow oil wick flame containers. Maharashtra, c. early 20th century.







79-82. Variations of fantasy in the making of decorative lamps show imagination and skill.



79



80



81



82

78. Terracotta lamp with Durga face and torso enshrined in a halo from which spring lamp bowls. Bengal, c. mid 20th century.





83. This heavy peacock suspended from a thick chain comes from one of the great temples of South India.

c. 19th century.

The smaller hanging lamps with bird shapes for bases were used in the inner sanctum by the side of the images of the gods.





88. A brass lamp for teacher and pupil with higher and lower lamp bowls attached to the central stand.  
South India, c. 18th century.
89. The Tree of life motif is adapted in this lamp bowl resting over a horse and crowned by a peacock.  
Deccan/South India, c. 19th century.
90. Dipika, a brass lamp in the form of a woman holding a lamp cup in her left hand.  
Gujarat, c. 19th century.
91. Maruti brass lamp: two-armed Maruti (Hanuman) holding a lamp.  
Maharashtra, c. 19th century.









90



91

92







# Wood Carving

*'Brahman was the wood,  
Brahman the tree  
from which  
they shaped  
heaven and earth.'*

Taitirīya Brāhmaṇa<sup>1</sup>



The section of carved wooden entrance doors, inner doors and windows of the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum offers some of the finest examples of wood working as applied to these architectural features. Out of some twenty doors on display, six come from Gujarat, five from Rajasthan, three from Maharashtra, one from Orissa and the rest from the Southern India.

Before the art of stone carving and stone construction became popular in India in the early pre-Christian centuries, most of the craftsmen had been working in wood and ivory. Early exercises in stone as seen in the flat reliefs at Udayagiri and Khandagiri in Orissa or at Barhut and Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh, indicate that the artisans were struggling with the new material. The Sanchi inscription testifies that some reliefs were carved there by the guilds of ivory workers of Vidishā. Tradition of wood carvers in India is much older than that of stone carvers.

Even if once upon a time the occupations of carpenters in general, and specialisation in a certain branch of carpentry were confined to certain traditional communities, this division does not hold good anymore. Persons coming from different vocations practised the art of wood carving. In many parts of India the blacksmiths, the potters, the stone workers, the painters and even the farmers seem to have adopted carpentry or *vice versa*.

A traditional carpenter inherits his work tools from his father. In addition to these he buys new ones in the market or gets them made at the workshops of a blacksmith. A hand-saw having various sizes of teeth is used for dividing the blocks of wood, a wooden planer containing an iron blade is rubbed to and fro for levelling and smoothening the surface.

◀ 92. An invocational lamp of brass with primitivist nagini. South India, c. early 20th century.

In addition to these tools, chisels having circular, semi-circular, V-shaped or straight edges, gauges of various thicknesses, files of variety of grains, drills, adzes, hammers, etc. are used.

For finer carving of ornate nature a series of chisels is needed.

Stencils with the required designs are cut on cardboard and are later transferred on the wooden block for incision.



Castor oil and linseed oil are usually applied to wooden furniture for polish and durability.

Carving out all the required compartments, cavities and other components, from one piece of wood, rather than adding joints was considered skilful and therefore many earlier boxes, turban-hangers, opium mortars etc. were carved from one block of wood.

Teak, *tectona grandis*, and sisam, *dalbergia sisoo*, are the most valued of the wood types. Due to its strength, teak is preferred for construction work and due to its solidity for ornate carving. In fact teak and sisam are good for any construction, carving or lathe turning. Traditional objects made from teak and sisam range from a simple wooden chest to a huge ship. Sisam is preferred for chests and furnitures, *adina cordifolia* for making pillars and brackets. *Acadirachta indica*, *manilcana hexandra*, *maduca indica*, and *magniferra indica* are also commonly used for household wood-work. For lathe-turned objects any common tree such as *acacia arabica* or *erithrina suberosa* etc. are used which are popularly grouped under the class "angli" or wild trees.

#### Gujarat and Rajasthan

Gujarat and Rajasthan are particularly rich in wood carving as can be seen from the surviving monuments and objects. Perhaps the finest and most elaborate examples of wood carving come from Patan in North Gujarat which represents a faction of the same common great tradition which extends up to Bikaner, Jodhpur, Barmer and Jaisalmer. With various combinations of carved pillars, capitals, brackets, arches, domes and panels of pierced lattice work impressive niches, balconies, entrance gates and verandahs of temples and residential houses in Rajasthan and Gujarat were constructed of which perhaps the best examples are the temples of Patan, especially Vaḍi Pārasnāth temple of the Jaina community (now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York).

In addition to architectural parts the custom of using carved wooden chests called *majus* was very popular all over Gujarat and Rajasthan. The façades of these oblong chests normally made from sisam were intricately carved. Often parrots, peacocks, or human figures were attached to it as brackets. Another sturdier chest having wheels at the bottom called *patāro* was more common in Gujarat. The latter was usually encased in ornately embossed metal plaques. Other wooden objects of every-day life such as spice boxes, turban hangers, cradles, beds, swings, pitcher stands, lamps, opium boxes, opium grinders, hukkah parts, etc. were either carved or lathe-turned. The carved variety usually had shallow relief work of ornate motifs of flower and birds, whereas the lathe-turned objects were usually painted or adorned with lac. Some fine examples of these can be found in the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum.

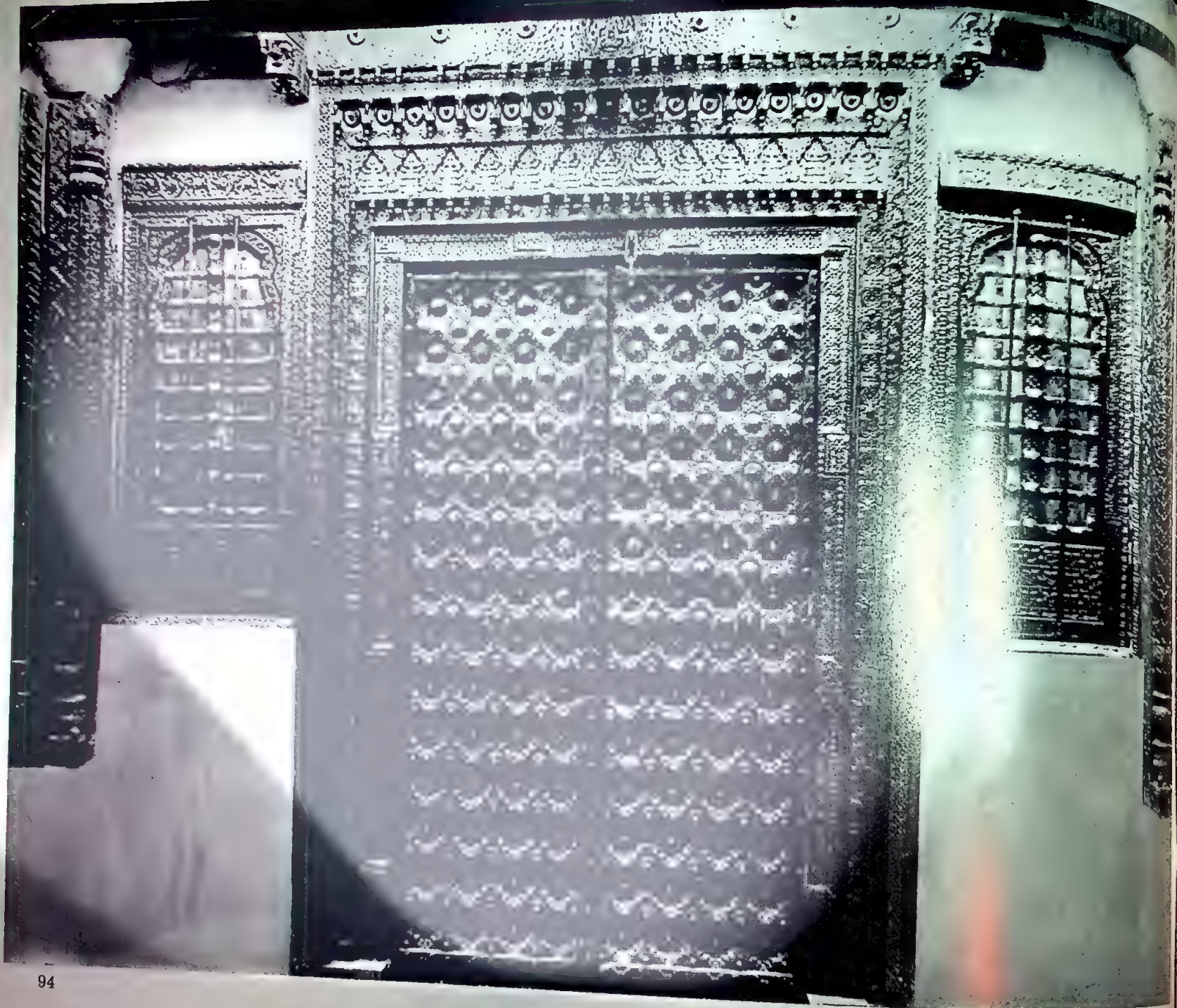
Like any other traditional wooden door the doors of Gujarat and Rajasthan (also as represented in the Museum) have two heavy door flaps which, when closed, slightly overlap. The door frame consists of two vertical pillar-like parts with pillar base (or stone or wood) which flank the door on each side and are topped by a horizontal lintel. The door flaps are attached to the frame usually with a pivot, but sometimes with hinges. Parallel to the lintel at the bottom usually there is a horizontal threshold. The door lintel is often heavily ornamented with intricate carving of floral and faunal motifs. In some cases the lintel tends to adopt the shape of an arch. In the centre of the lintel of the entrance door usually there is a small niche in which an auspicious symbol is carved which in most cases is either a Gaṇeśa or a full vase (*pūrṇa ghaṭa*). In the case of some Jaina temple doors the lintel is filled with the motifs of eight auspicious marks or fourteen auspicious dreams. Each flap of the door usually is divided into several squares or rectangular sections with the help of vertical and horizontal carved belts. Mostly these sections





93. Balakrishna, being the ideal child is here incarnated in the wooden scooter pushed by babies to learn to walk.





94

94. The most intricate door carvings are from Rajasthan or Gujarat, where the householder's eyes have to rest on decorative detail in the house after passing the day in the broad glare of arid landscape.

are embellished with a wooden doll. The flaps of a door from Rajasthan in the same Museum are divided into several small sections each being adorned with ornate iron knobs.

Another delicate door from Rajasthan is painted in a Rajasthani style showing *rāsaliḷā*, the circle dance of Kṛṣṇa and *gopis* on the door flaps and figures of musicians on the door frame. One of the most beautiful examples of a Rajasthan door in the Museum is that of a wooden one from Jaisalmer, heavily inlaid with ivory. The door has a fivefold receding door frame with Gaṇeśa in the uppermost lintel and peacock pendants in the fourth one. The door flaps are almost completely encased in ivory mosaic.

The carved windows of Gujarat and Rajasthan are either with flaps or with fixed screens having floral surface ornamentation or perforated tracery of wood.

Often two small bracket figures of parrot, peacocks, horse heads or dolls are fixed as lintel projections.

Two Gujarat screen windows are fixed in the outer wall of the Museum building; these have rich lattice work consisting of regular lines of carved flower balls.



95. Folk image of Parvati and Ganesha as mother and child. The mother and child relationship made real for the householder.

96. Ganesha riding a tiger—an essay in a new kind of icon of the folk imagination.

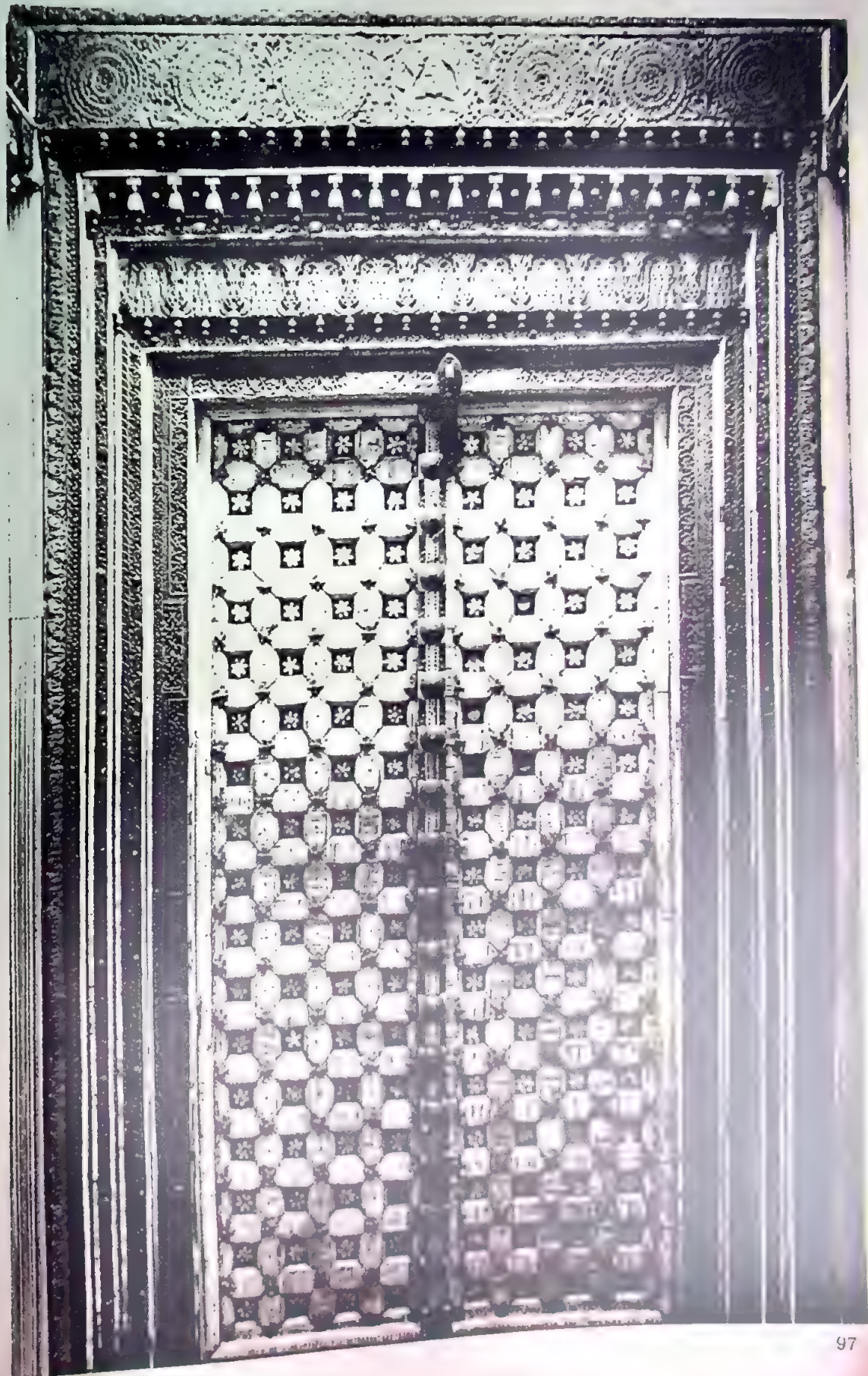
97. An exquisitely carved, ivory-studded wooden door from Jaisalmer, Rajasthan.



95



96



97





98. Wooden dolls carved into an original doorway, perhaps meant for children's room.  
 99. Wooden puppet from Rajasthan.



## Deccan

The geographic situation of the Deccan is obviously responsible for the typical features of the carved wooden elements of the Deccan architecture. The Deccan forms a kind of girdle dividing the Northern and Southern regions of the country. The Hinduistic features of the Deccan school have their roots in the architecture of the Jain and Hindu devotees among the Chālukyas, whereas the Islamic influence comes from the mosques and palaces of Bijapur.

The Museum has an entrance door from Paithan. Paithan (ancient Pratiṣṭhāna) has been an old capital of the Sātavāhana and has witnessed various currents of the subsequent ruling dynasties. The door is low and small, but too massive for the size. It has triple receding door frame with the figure of Gaṇeśa in one of the lintel frames, the others being adorned with carved peacocks. The flat spaces of the lintel are covered with *jali* or perforated wooden plaques over a lining of *mica* sheets. Due to this device the perforated portions with *mica* reflected the light of the lamps at night imparting an effect of multiple small lamps in the lintel. The device is commonly used in the carved wooden furniture from Saurashtra.

Another Maharashtrian door in the Musuem is from Talegaon near Pune. This one, too, is low and massive with triple receding door frame. On the upper-most lintel frame there are fine creepers with ivory inlay; the central lintel has projecting peacocks and the lowest one is adorned with the figure of Gaṇeśa.

Ratnagiri and Aurangabad are two known centres of inlay work in wood in Maharashtra.

## The South

The wood carving of the South has the same typical identity as the Dravidian style of architecture. The central structure of a Dravidian temple might be a small insignificant structure, but a series of *gopuram* or gates and doors leading to it are most gigantic and elaborate. Madurai is a famous centre of the black sisam wood carving, and Bellary for beautiful doors with shallow incisions.

A large South Indian door, complete with two side windows, flanking the door in the Musuem, appears to be a temple door. A prominent projection from the lintel provides a kind of protection to the door underneath. The lintel is adorned with the central image of *gajalakṣmī*. The door has two flaps, each of them having a handle in the form of a little *vyāla* figure. The flaps are divided into several rectangular compartments with the help of carved ornate borders. In the compartments there are images of Gaṇeśa and Kārtikeya, Pārvaṭī and Kārtikeya, Śiva Nāṭarāja, Gaṇeśa with a child on lap, Kārtikeya and consort, and Śiva and an ascetic.

## Miscellaneous Wooden Objects

Besides the doors and windows of exquisite quality in the Musuem, there are a few painted wooden sculptures of the later period from South India and Maharashtra. The giant-sized *vyāla* figures and those of Viṣṇu, Agni, etc. are massive and stiff with protruding eyes and elaborate surface ornamentation. Two slightly smaller than life size statues of mother and child originating from Pune are finely carved and painted having more or less the same style and charm as the good-quality glass paintings of the nineteenth century.

A remarkable category of objects in the Musuem are six carved wooden rolling carts for children to learn to stand up and walk a few steps while holding and leaning on the cart. These carts made of light square and triangular frames have two wheels at the back and one in the front. In the case of these ornate South Indian ones the frames are beautifully carved or lathe turned and embellished with floral and faunal motifs, and at least in one case with the figure of child Kṛṣṇa sucking his finger, or licking butter.

—JYOTINDRA JAIN



## Artefacts for Use in Writing:

### Ink wells and Pen cases

The Western concept of pre-history, proto-history and history are based on whether or not, in a certain period the art of writing was known. At a certain stage the owners of Harappa culture had known writing and had left evidences in the form of terracotta seals having pictographic characters. The Vedic Aryans who had much advanced material culture and beautiful poetry remained 'illiterate' as they had not known the art of writing. In the later Vedic period too, however, there are no such references; one might venture to think that the art had existed, because the art of writing as evident from the elaborate Brahmi inscriptions of Asoka could not have evolved overnight. Because of similarities of the flood legend of Manu and the fish and that of Noah's ark which suggests Semitic influence, if it is understood that the Indians of the later Vedic age were in contact with Mesopotamia, it might be surmised that a Semitic script was brought home by traders which finally evolved as Brahmi. Whether Brahmi evolved from Semitic script or from the Harappan is a controversial matter. Another script called Kharoṣṭhī (lit. 'of the donkey-lip') which was clearly derived from Aramaeic alphabet existed in the Aśokan age in the Northwestern region and continued to be used in later times. As the time passed the Brahmi letters were more perfected and compacted to acquire the status of Nāgarī (lit. 'of the city') and Devanāgarī (lit. 'of the god's city'), which remains in use till today. The materials for the history of the art of writing are the stone inscriptions, copper plates, palm and paper manuscripts, textiles etc. Paper was known in China at the early Christian centuries and whether it was known in India at the same time is uncertain. The earliest available manuscripts are those of palm leaf on which letters are inscribed with stylus and black powder filled inside the trenches to impart contrast. In some areas birch leaves, thin slices of wood or sized silks and cottons were used.

Accounts keeping and manuscript copying were the two important uses of the art of writing, and therefore the art has remained through the centuries the monopoly of the Brahmin and the Bania castes, who also adopted the occupations of teachers, medical practitioners and *paṇḍits*. Some of the earliest palm and paper manuscripts of Western India happen to be Jaina manuscripts. This is not an accident, because this exclusively rich and trading community of Banias had mastered the art of keeping systematic business records.

Ink has been the most suited writing medium. By dipping a pointed reed pen in ink made from lamp black, the paper manuscripts were written. The ink was made at home by boiling a solution of water, gum, certain herbs and lamp-black. The ink thus prepared was stored in large jars and was taken out in small quantities in ink pots for daily use. Pens with different tip thicknesses were also prepared in quantity and kept in pen cases which were either attached to the ink wells or were independent boxes.

A Bania merchant spent more time with his ink pots and reed pens than with his own wife and children, and therefore the most sophisticated ones allowed themselves the luxury of possessing elaborately ornate ink wells and pen cases.



The collection of ink wells and pen cases in the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum is fairly representative of the variety of designs and areas of origin.

Almost all the ink wells are made of brass either by casting or by forging. The simple ones are just circular or cylindrical bottles with narrow mouth.

The more ornate ones have animal forms, such as elephant, horses, camels, lions, tortoise, parrots, peacocks, swans. These can be divided into two classes, namely those where the body of the animal or the bird itself forms the ink well, and those where the well or the bottle part is of cylindrical or leaf or flower shape and where the animal or bird forms are affixed from outside.

In most cases of the former class, where the body of the animal serves as the bottle, the lid consists of figures of riders, birds or pointed knobs.

In the latter class of cylindrical bottles adorned with animals etc, the head of the animal (elephant or horse) is attached on one side or on two sides or in some cases in all four directions.

Often a rider is shown mounting the animal.

In some rare cases multi-armed Gaṇeśa is shown riding a horse or an elephant. It is not surprising to see the figures of this popular deity and those of elephants (connected with Lakṣmī, the Goddess of Wealth) on the ink wells, because in many parts of the country at the time of New Year the new account books are opened and the ink pots, the pens and even the account books are worshipped in anticipation of the favour of the goddess Lakṣmī and Gaṇeśa.

One of the popular forms of ink wells is a bottle with a fluted belly or cylindrical container having a pagoda-like pointed and tapering multi-tiered lid. Usually at the base of such a bottle a metal pen case is attached which consists of two long brass pipes joined together by a perforated screen. In some cases the lid is tied with a chain to the body of the pot.

Most ink wells have three to four metal loops through which strings are pierced and tied so that the pot can be suspended from the wall or ceiling.

A few pots in the collection are in the form of a cart having four wheels. When not attached to the ink well, the pen cases are shaped as long cylindrical pipes or oblong boxes made of metal, ivory, wood, papier-maché etc. The cylindrical containers of metal have, in most cases, perforations all over the body and the cap. All cylindrical pen cases are opened at one end by a small lid consisting of a knob, which fits inside the mouth. The oblong boxes of wood are plain, or inlaid with ivory or painted with floral or figural motifs or are lacquered. The ivory boxes are adorned with fine incisions and paintings.

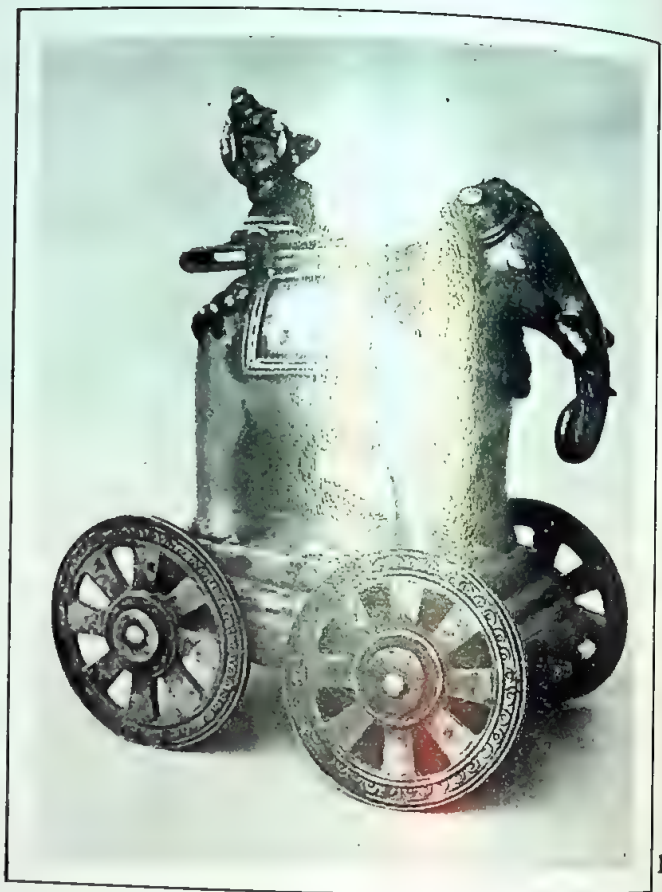
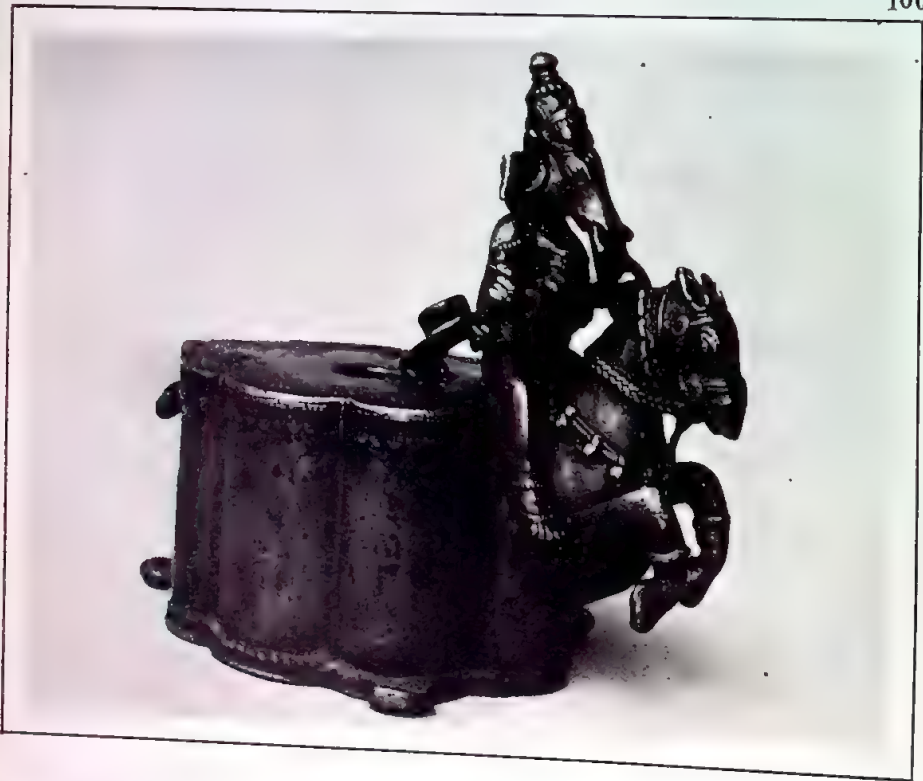
The interior of the oblong wooden and ivory boxes is divided into several compartments of which the long ones are for keeping pens and the smaller ones for keeping small metal containers, one for black sand and the other for ink. The sand container usually has small holes on the upper cover (as in salt and pepper containers) from which the sand is sprinkled over the wet writing. The sand absorbs the extra ink. Thus the writing dries up faster.

These boxes have delicate workmanship and the ink wells placed inside are rather small, which goes to indicate that these were used for casual letter writing rather than for daily usage.

—JYOTINDRA JAIN



100



101

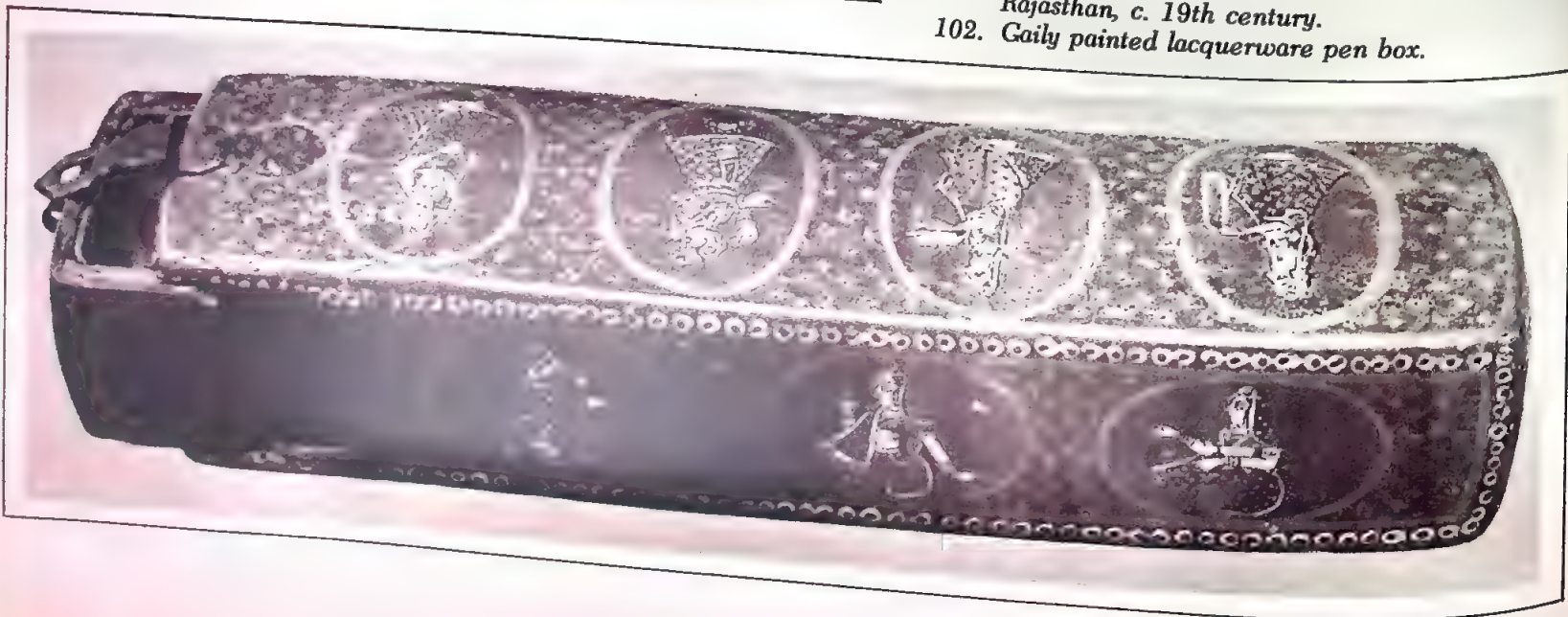
100. A leaf-shaped ink well of brass having the unique figure of Ganesha riding a horse.

Rajasthan, c. 19th century.

101. An ink well of brass having wheels in which the actual bottle is in the shape of an elephant and cap in that of a rider.

Rajasthan, c. 19th century.

102. Gaily painted lacquerware pen box.



102





103. *An ink well in the form of a seated camel with a rider as cap, cast by an ingenious imagination to primitivist fantasy. Rajasthan, c. 19th century.*







# The Culture of Tāmbula:

Betel boxes, Lime containers  
and Nut-crackers

*'Coming out of the bath-chamber,  
the King should enter  
the pleasure-hall  
He should then  
summon the officer-in-charge  
of tāmbula  
and then enjoy a tāmbula.'*

*Mānasollāsa<sup>1</sup>*



104. A brass nut-cracker with the blandishment of bells attached to the figures to amuse the ladies with the jingling sounds.  
105. A brass nut-cracker depicting a family with a man, woman and a child. Maharashtra, c. 19th century.



A prominent section of the collection of the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum is devoted to metal containers (mainly of brass) for betel leaf and its accessories, such as catechu, lime, cardamom, cloves, etc. which are customarily consumed along with betel leaf. The entire betel leaf culture, seemingly of Gupta origin, is spread far and wide in India. Since there are elaborate descriptions in literature, not only to cultivation of betel leaf, areca nut and extraction and preparation of catechu and lime, but also about the preparation of betel leaf, auspicious and inauspicious occasions for its consumption, proportions and qualities of various ingredients, qualification of the eater according to caste, gender, etc., no wonder the containers for these were also variedly designed.

Before the collection of betel boxes and lime containers is described, it will be out of place here to refer to the historical and ethnic aspects connected with betel leaf culture.

The most common and frequently used Sanskrit word for betel is *tāmbula* (chewing quid) which keeps occurring in inscriptions and literature from early Christian centuries onwards. However, the most common vernacular words *pān* (meaning 'a leaf') in Marathi, *biḍu* (Gujarati), *biḍa* (Hindi), meaning 'folded or prepared betel leaf' are not derived from *tāmbula*. In early Gṛhyasūtra there are no references to *tāmbula*. *Tāmbula* was probably introduced some time before or about the beginning of the Christian era in South India and then spread northwards. It is most likely that betel and areca nut were chewed traditionally in Ceylon and South East Asia earlier and from there via the South and East spread all over India.

The earliest inscriptional reference to *tāmbula* occurs in the Mandasor silk weavers' inscription which says: "(just as) a woman though endowed with youth and beauty (and) adorned with the arrangement of golden necklaces and betel leaves and flowers, goes not to meet (her) lover in a secret place until she has put on a pair of coloured silken clothes. . ."<sup>2</sup>

As apparent in the above inscription, eating of betel leaf was predominantly connected with *śṛṅgāra*. In the games of love and erotic plays *tāmbula* had an important role. In the *Naisadhiya-caritam* of Śrīharṣa. (12th century) Nala tells Damayanti: "Dost thou recollect, after passing bits of betel from my mouth into thine, I justly demand them back."<sup>3</sup> *Mānasollāsa*, a text on the royal duties and enjoyments attributed to Somēśvara, a 12th century Chalukya king, mentions the consumption of betel leaf among the eight enjoyments such as unguents, incenses, woman, clothes, music, betel leaf and areca nut, bed and food. Since *tāmbula* was deeply connected with enjoyments and erotic plays, it can be easily inferred that the accessories such as the containers connected with betel leaf and betel nut were also made with great care and imagination. However, there are scarcely early references to containers for betel leaf, areca nut, lime etc., one frequently sees in the miniature paintings, especially those connected with romantic themes of *nāyaka-nāyikā-bheda*, *rāgamālā*, *rasikapriyā*, *rāsamañjarī*, etc.; depictions of utensils connected with enjoyment of betel leaf etc. These containers are shown lying on the floor near the bed or a couch and in most cases showing decorative perforations which keep the leaves fresh due to circulation of fresh air. In some miniatures a lover is shown offering betel leaf to his beloved or *vice versa*.

Betel leaf eating has great significance in the wedding rituals of most provinces of India. Folded betel leaf containing lime, catechu, areca nut, cloves, cardamom, etc. are distributed at wedding parties. The Kathi women of Saurashtra make highly ornate bags for keeping areca nuts to be distributed to the guests at the wedding parties. In Maharashtra there is a special wedding custom in which the bride holds a prepared and folded betel leaf in her mouth of which the bridegroom bites up the other end.<sup>4</sup> This custom is reflected in some Marathi dictionaries: "*vidi*—a roll of betel leaf, a clove, a slice of copra etc. given to the bride and the bridegroom for cutting



by the teeth at marriage ceremonies"<sup>5</sup> and "*vidi*— at weddings. A roll of the leaf of piper betel or a piece of coconut, or a clove put into the mouth of the bride or bridegroom, for him or her to tear it out with the teeth"<sup>6</sup>. Among the Marathas, the articles presented to the bride and the bridegroom by their respective fathers-in-law include betel boxes.<sup>7</sup>

In popular belief betel leaf is potent with thirteen qualities. There are also references to thirteen ingredients to be eaten with betel leaf. A known verse to this effect is as follows:<sup>8</sup>

'Bitterness, pungency, heat, sweetness, saltiness, astringent flavour, properties against gas, sceptic and phlegm and capacity to simulate eros, to lend beauty to the mouth and purify' it, to destroy all four odour are the 13 qualities of *tāmbula* which are not obtainable even in heaven.'

These qualities of popular belief are recognized in most treatises of Indian medical literature. It is also believed that in a proper preparation of *tāmbula* thirteen ingredients such as areca nut, betel leaf, lime, camphor, cardamom, clove, kankola, coconut, almond, nutmeg, the bark of nutmeg, saffron, and catechu are required. The various medical and other properties assigned to *tāmbula* might be due to the various ingredients employed in its preparation.

Apart from amorous and medical reasons, the use of *tāmbula* is prescribed in daily life by Vātsyāyana in *Kāmasūtra*<sup>9</sup> where he says that "after cleaning the teeth and having looked in the mirror and having eaten a *tāmbula* to render fragrance to the mouth, should a person start his day's work."

In most forms of Hindu worship *naivedya*, food offerings, are made to deities and *piṇḍa*, rice ball offerings, to ancestors. From literary references<sup>10</sup> and actual practice, it is amply evident that *tāmbula* offering is an integral part of such modes of worship. Among the Vallabha *sampradāya* of the Vaiṣṇavas of Gujarat there are sixteen prescribed manners of worship of Kṛṣṇa, of which one is that of offering betel leaf.<sup>11</sup> In the Nāthadvāra paintings of Śrī Nāthaji it is customary to show a betel box and a pair of folded betel leaves near the feet of the god. It is interesting to note that in Gujarat and elsewhere at the time of installation of Gaṇeśa in the wedding ceremony it is often done by placing an areca nut on a betel leaf.

Being the articles of enjoyment the betel leaf and areca nut are prohibited by the authors of Dharmasāstra for widows, ascetics and the students of Veda.<sup>12</sup>

The earliest reference to the use and proportions of lime, catechu, and areca nut goes back to the 6th century.<sup>13</sup> This piece is so interesting and informative that I quote it *in extenso*:

'A moderate dose of lime used with betel leaves gives good colour; an extra quantity of areca nut spoils the colour; excessive lime produces bad smell in the mouth, but an extra quantity of betel leaf, pleasant smell.'

The number of ingredients used has an influence on the design of the betel cases. The large brass betel cases having multiple sections and tiers obviously belonged to a well-to-do household. For travelling as well as while working in the field, or cattle grazing, small boxes with two or three compartments were made. Often there were small handy boxes only with one or two compartments which were exclusively lime boxes, or boxes for lime and catechu.

The popularity of *tāmbula* is so universal that in the later period full literary works devoted exclusively to *tāmbula*, its preparations, qualities etc., came into existence. A 16th-century work on Dharmasāstra called the *Jyotiribandha* contains 24 stanzas on *tāmbula*.<sup>14</sup> Another full work





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106. A heart-shaped betel box of brass with perforation and having wheels.  
Maharashtra, c. early 20th century.



107

107. A brass betel box in the form of a pumpkin.  
Maharashtra, c. early 20th century.



108. A bell-metal betel box in the form of an elephant with wheels, carrying a box topped by a figure of a woman.

Bastar, Madhya Pradesh, c. early 20th century.

109. A circular lime container having a double peacock motif in the hinges.

Maharashtra, c. early 20th century.

110. A mango-shaped lime box with a row of small figures of birds and animals surrounding it.



109



108



110



devoted to *tāmbula* is *Tāmbulamāñjarī*, edited by J. S. Pade and published under M.S. Univ. Oriental Series.<sup>15</sup> *Mānasollāsa* describes elaborately the different ingredients and their qualities connected with *tāmbula* (sloka 799).

The collection of the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum offers more than 150 varieties of betel boxes and lime containers. The most characteristic feature of a betel box is the perforation work either in the lid or in the entire case. In addition to the quality of ornateness the perforations allow fresh air to circulate inside and thus keep the leaves fresh for a longer period. As in metal lamps the perforations seem to become popular in betel boxes too, as a result of Islamic influence which is so apparent in Islamic architecture. The boxes in the present collection are of various geometric shapes and of varied sizes—circular, rectangular, square, oval, hexagonal, octagonal, pyramidal, etc. Some of the shapes are based on such organic forms as pumpkin, lotus, flower, leaf etc. Forms of peacocks, parrots, ducks, fish, swan, elephants, human heads etc. are hollow cast and constructed into containers. Almost every box has an ornamental handle attached to the lid which often takes the shape of a small fruit, a ring, a flower, a peacock, a human head etc. In the cases where perforation work is avoided, the surface is usually adorned with chiselled or punched designs or emboss work. In some boxes small replicas of human figures and animal forms are cast separately and welded onto the surfaces. In some cases the boxes are embellished with metal inlay or *bidri* work. The large boxes usually have legs in the shape of lion's paws or parrots or peacocks, often with turned necks. Many a large box has wheels at the bottom. Such boxes were used for the entertainment of large groups such as at wedding parties, at dance and music performances, and poetry reading sessions, wherein the box could be rolled on the floor from person to person.

The boxes are with or without inner compartments. Often when the box is opened, first there is a flat tray on top for keeping betel leaves and a nut cracker. Underneath the plate there are different compartments for the ingredients such as lime, catechu, cloves etc. Before the introduction of *jāli* and the sophistication of construction, often the betel boxes were made of *khas* grass or even terracotta which were kept wet by sprinkling water so that the leaves remained fresh.

In addition to the larger betel boxes there is in the Museum entire collection of *chunali*, lime containers. These comparatively smaller and compactly designed containers have such fine and varied shapes that while looking at once at all the pieces together, one perceives the loving care on the part of the maker and the fondness and taste of the user. The most remarkable shapes include those of myrobalan fruit, mango, coconut, leaf, flower, fish, tortoise, peacock, parrot, swan, duck, horse, elephant, etc. The round containers in the shape of a ball and myrobalan open into two hemispheres and often have a chain attached to them. As in betel boxes the lid knobs shaped, as peacock neck, animal head, flower or a leaf. To the chain that issues from the hinges is often attached a spoon to scratch out lime from the box. The designs of the variety of lime containers by stylisation of natural forms are fascinating, because of the various thoughtful devices day life of a traditional house much richer and devoid of the jerky dichotomy of art and utility. Art was separated from the conviviality of its users, it was certainly for the *rasika*, but not necessarily for the élite.

### Nut-Crackers

The instrument for breaking areca nut is commonly rendered in English as nut-cracker or nut-cutter. Areca nut, slightly narcotic in character, is a fruit of the areca palm which grows in the



vast coastal areas of India. It is consumed either with betel leaf or independent of it. In spite of formidable indigenous production, thousands of tons of areca nuts are imported to India from South East Asia every year.

As seen in the section dealing with betel boxes, the betel leaf and areca nut culture can be traced to the Gupta period. But surprisingly there is no recorded and identifiable Sanskrit word for the instrument. In modern Hindi it is known as *sarota* which could have been derived from *sārapatraka* (sanskrit), a sharp blade. In Gujarati it is known as *sūḍi* (a small nut-cracker) and *sūḍo* (a big one). These words mean female and male parrots respectively and perhaps are so called because an average nut-cracker resembles the form of the bird. The common Marathi word for nut cracker is *āḍkitta*. It seems that the word is a corrupt form of combination of two Kannada words, *aḍaki* (areca nut) and *ottu* (to cut, to crack). The word *pophal-phoḍna* for nut-cracker was common in Marathi language in the 13th century,<sup>16</sup> but seems to have been replaced by *āḍkitta* in the later period. However, in Sanskrit the word *śamkula* occurs as early as in Pāṇjali's *Mahābhāṣya*, but has doubtful meanings. It is understood by some scholars like V. S. Agrawala to mean nut-cracker.<sup>17</sup>

For a long time in the imagination of the connoisseurs the name of Dinkar Kelkar was synonymous with nut-cracker. As early as 1948, his collection of nut-crackers was displayed in an exhibition in Pune.

Out of the entire collection of 400 objects almost 80% of the nut-crackers originate from Maharashtra and the rest from different provinces of Southern India, Gujarat, and Rajasthan.

Most pieces are cast or forged in brass or iron except a few in silver. At least one piece in the collection has ivory plaques covering the handle.

Both the parts of the nut-cracker namely the cutting edge and the butt are intricately ornamented. Forms of peacock, parrot and swan are very common, but also those of horse, ram, dragon, winged centaur, sphinx, lion are employed in the design.

In some rare cases the lever with the cutting edge is surmounted by an image of Sarasvatī and of Viṣṇu Śeṣāyini.

Many a nut-cracker is in the form of *mithuna*, an amorous couple in embrace, in which one of the levers is in the form of a man and another in that of a woman. When such a nut-cracker is operated, a hand of the man keeps touching the breast of the woman. In some nut-crackers, during the operation, the acts of kissing and parting are repeated. In some cases a sexual intercourse is indicated.

It has been suggested by some connoisseurs that these nut-crackers along with those having a ram or a lion belong to a series of zodiac signs, such as *mithuna*, *meśa*, *śimha*, respectively. Perhaps more convincing and realistic interpretation would be to take the *mithuna* nut-crackers as amorous couples rather than a zodiac sign, because the culture of *tāmbula* is deeply connected with *śṛṅgāra* and there are many literary references to transferring pieces of betel-leaf from the mouth of the lover to that of the beloved. Perhaps the Maharashtrian custom of biting off betel leaf by the bridegroom from the mouth of the bride is indicated by the nut-crackers with kissing device.

In one cracker there is a device that on one side it looks as if a mother is hugging her child, and on the reverse side it appears that a man is embracing a woman.



Some Maratha nut-crackers show various turban types ranging from those of Gwalior (Sindhia), Indore (Holkar), Baroda (Gaekwad) and Pune (Peshva).

In some nut-crackers bunches of small silver bells are attached to both the levers which make rhythmic sound while using.

Some instances, are nut-crackers cum daggers. The handles of these can be unfolded and turned back, and the pointed triangular blade of the dagger with two sharp edges (which function also as the cutting edges of the nut-cracker) project out.

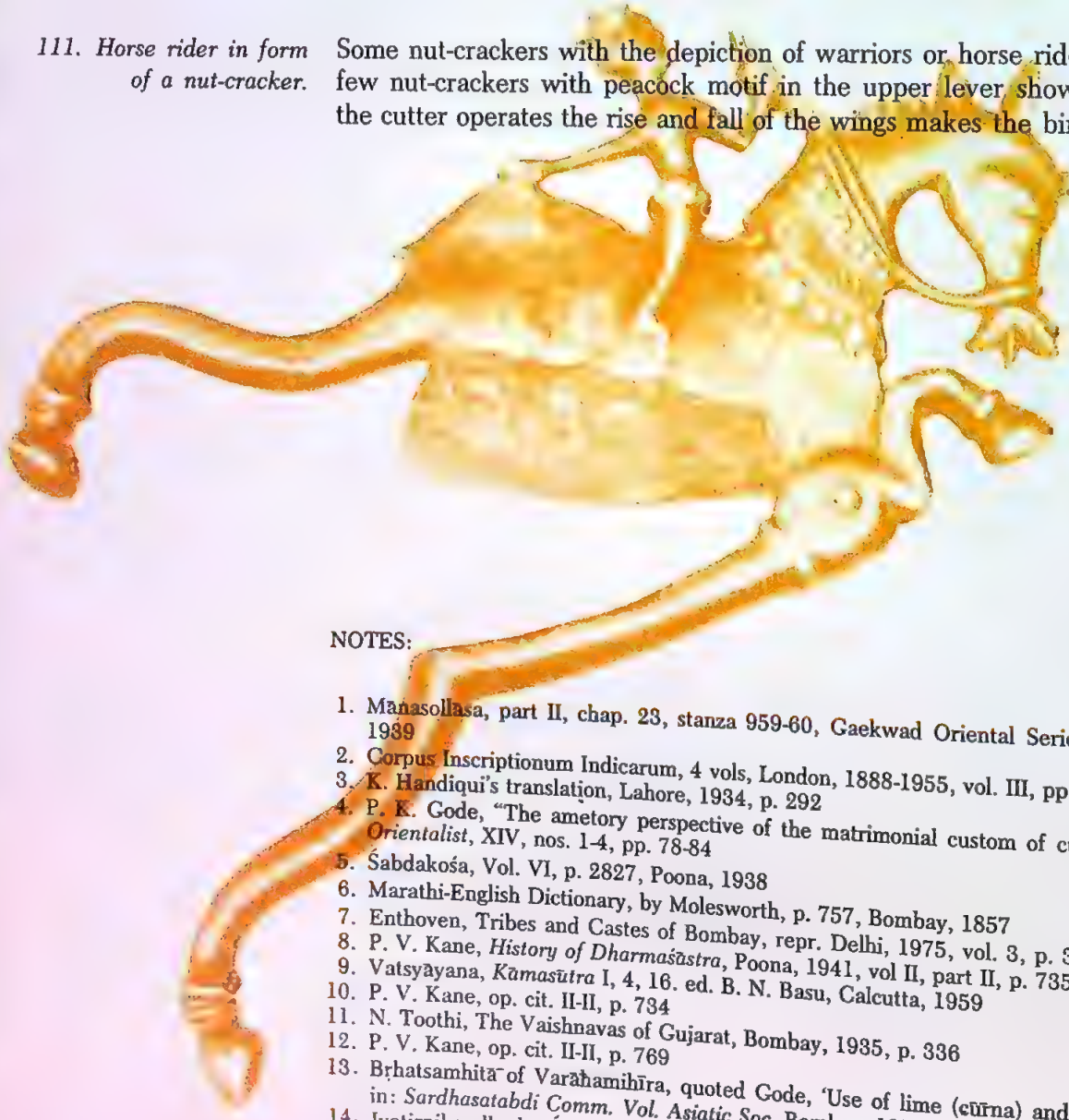
A few pieces in the collection originate from Hyderabad wherein intricate silver work adorns either or both surfaces.

The date of the crackers in the collection ranges from the 18th century to modern times.

111. Horse rider in form of a nut-cracker.

Some nut-crackers with the depiction of warriors or horse riders originate from Rajasthan. A few nut-crackers with peacock motif in the upper lever show the bird with open wings. As the cutter operates the rise and fall of the wings makes the bird appear with fluttering wings.

—JYOTINDRA JAIN



NOTES:

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2. Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, 4 vols, London, 1888-1955, vol. III, pp. 46 ff.
3. K. Handiqui's translation, Lahore, 1934, p. 292
4. P. K. Gode, "The amatory perspective of the matrimonial custom of cutting betel leaf roll (vidi)", in: *Poona Orientalist*, XIV, nos. 1-4, pp. 78-84
5. Śabdakośa, Vol. VI, p. 2827, Poona, 1938
6. Marathi-English Dictionary, by Molesworth, p. 757, Bombay, 1857
7. Enthoven, Tribes and Castes of Bombay, repr. Delhi, 1975, vol. 3, p. 39
8. P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, Poona, 1941, vol II, part II, p. 735
9. Vatsyāyana, *Kāmasūtra* I, 4, 16. ed. B. N. Basu, Calcutta, 1959
10. P. V. Kane, op. cit. II-II, p. 734
11. N. Toothi, *The Vaishnavas of Gujarat*, Bombay, 1935, p. 336
12. P. V. Kane, op. cit. II-II, p. 769
13. Brhatsamhitā of Varāhamihira, quoted Gode, 'Use of lime (cūrna) and catechu in tāmbula and its antiquity' in: *Sardhasatabdi Comm. Vol. Asiatic Soc. Bombay*, 1957, pp. 65-77
14. Jyotiribandha by Śivarāja, Anandasram Sanskrit Series, no. 85, ed. R. S. Vaidya, Poona, 1919
15. no. 3, 1952
16. P. K. Gode, 'Some words for the nut cracker', in: *Vāk*, no. 1, Dec. 1951, pp. 38-41
17. *ibid.* p. 41



## Artefacts of Beauty Culture: Vajris, Combs and Textiles

112. Vajri, a foot-scrubber  
of brass with two  
peacocks with elong-  
ated necks crossing  
each other.  
Maharashtra, late 19th  
century.





## Vajris



115

The collection of more than hundred varied brass pieces of *vajris*, skin of *abbe*, is unique not only because of such a large quantity assembled at one place, but also because of fineness of workmanship and the variety of themes, designs and conceptions. Almost all *vajris* are from South Maharashtra and Karnataka.

An average *vajri* consists of two parts, i.e. the pedestal and the crowning figure or composition of figures. The bottom of the pedestal having a rough surface created by cross-wise incisions serves as the grip by which the tool is held. The pedestal of almost all *vajris* has perforated lattice work. In addition to decorative compositions like the groups of peacocks, parrots, swans, there are scenes of hunting, wrestling, dancing, butter churning etc. Compositions of animal figures, involving a pair of elephants, or lions, or monkeys, or rams, or dogs, or a lion and an elephant etc., are most common.

In some rare cases, the themes of *gajalakṣmī*, a woman and child, a conch-blowing musician, a camel rider, a horse rider are depicted.



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## Combs

A collection of hair-drying pins includes five pieces of two or three spiked hair-combs. These combs having long and rather thick spikes are used for drying hair after bath in which the woman stands in the open air and constantly combs the locks of her hair with the thick-spiked pin which arranges the disorderly hair and simultaneously dries them. Sometimes the handles of these pins are in the form of a woman, or deer or any other animal or bird.

A beautiful brass mirror-cum-comb-cum-bottle for hair oil is a rare example of imaginative construction of a toilette object. In this case the handle consists of a circular bottle of hair oil, below which a mirror is fixed in a rectangular frame, beneath which a semicircular comb is attached.

About fifteen *surma* bottles of brass, mainly of South Indian origin, are in the form of a swan, a peacock, a parrot, or a standing woman. In most cases the base of the bottle is in the shape of a tortoise. In the latter case the container is a sort of a double bottle—the body of the tortoise and the crowning figure of a bird or woman.



119

- 113. Vajri, a foot-scrubber of brass in the form of a cage crowned by a peacock. Maharashtra, late 19th century.
- 114. Vajri, with two girls in play. Maharashtra, c. 19th century.
- 115. Vajri, with a woman churning butter. Gujarat, c. 19th century.
- 116. Vajri, with a lion and a musician. Maharashtra, c. early 20th century.
- 117. Vajri, with an elephant and a bear in play.
- 118. Tribal comb
- 119. Unique combination of bottle, mirror and comb.

118



# Textiles



120



121

120-122 Cholis or upper garments for women embroidered with traditional folk designs.



122





123

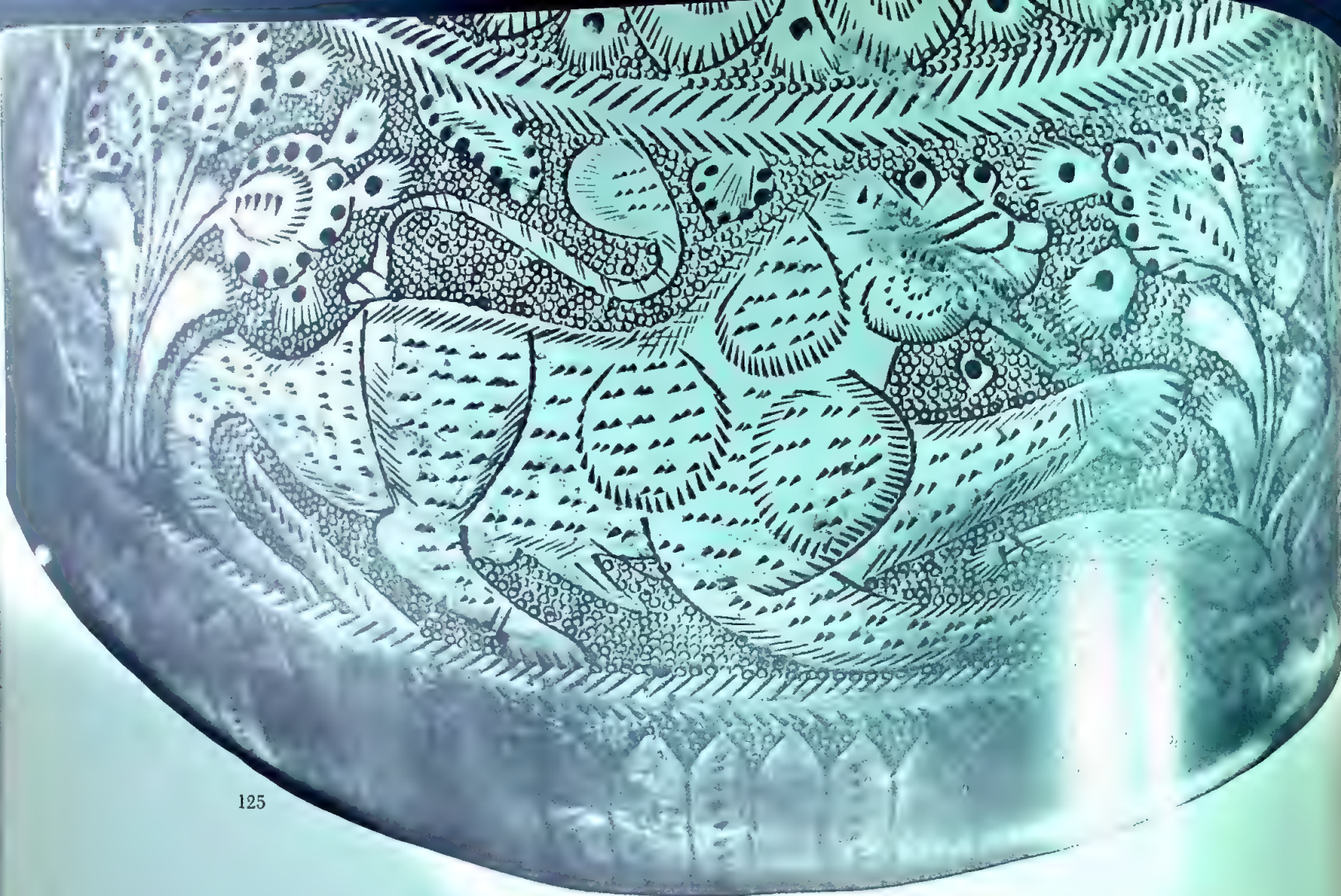
123. Pallav of Paithan saree with paisley pattern, obviously affected by Bijapur court style.

124. Detail of a Paithan saree.



124





125

125. Detail of a vitalist figure of lion in jungle foliage engraved on a brass bowl.

126-128 Brass lotas with finely rounded shapes and floral engravings.



127



126



128



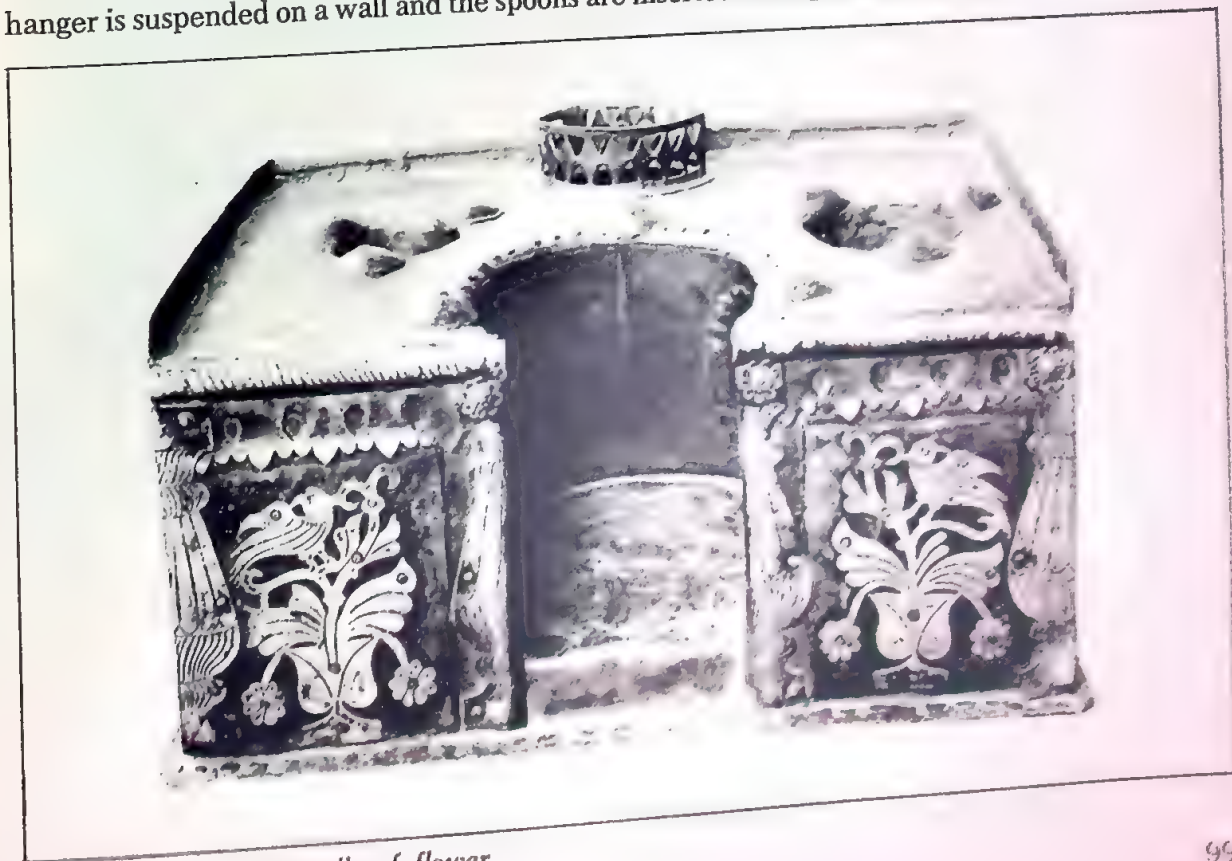
## Miscellaneous Utilities:

### Kitchen utensils and implements

A small and interesting collection of the kitchen utensils and equipments in the Museum includes a copper-oven, a few wooden spice boxes, some coconut and vegetable slicers, metal plates, wooden spoon hangers etc. Of these objects the most remarkable one is the copper oven. The oven is roughly in the shape of the traditional clay oven of the Indian villages, having two side walls and a back wall. In the front there are two semi-circular openings where firewood or coal is burnt. The hollow walls of the oven are constructed of double metal sheets, inside which water can be filled through holes on top. While cooking on the oven, the water inside the hollow walls starts to boil and thus keeps the already cooked food hot when the utensils containing the latter are kept on the side corners of the oven. The front walls of the oven are decorated with application of flower and bird motifs cut out from a brass sheet. The oven belongs to Rajasthan.

The vegetable and coconut slicers in the collection come from Assam, Bengal and Tamil Nadu. These beautiful and utilitarian objects usually have a wooden base (often ornately carved) and an iron blade rising from it usually in the shape of a bird. The silhouette of the forged iron bird is marked by extraordinarily simplified but forceful outline.

The technique of carving out of one block of wood, not only multisectional containers but also wooden chains and hangers, which give the appearance as if wattled, has been traditionally popular in Indian households. Two spice boxes in the present collection are typical examples of this. Each box is neatly carved from one piece of wood and has an ornate lid which is slid aside by rotating on a pivotal nail. The wooden spoon hangers from Tamil Nadu too, are carved from one piece of wood in such a way that there is an interwoven trellis pattern. The spoon hanger is suspended on a wall and the spoons are inserted through the holes of the pattern.



129. A copper oven with walls of flower and bird motifs.  
Rajasthan.



## Smoking pipes

In the seventeenth century, tobacco was introduced into India and before the end of that century, its cultivation and consumption became so widespread that India became one of the three highest tobacco-growing countries of the world. It is not that smoking was unknown before the introduction of tobacco. Hashish, cannabis and opium were known and smoked earlier. For smoking tobacco or hashish, cannabis etc. *chilams*, small smoking pipes, and *hukka*, water pipes for smoking, were developed. In this Museum a representative collection of *chilams* and *hukkas* is displayed. Most of the metal *chilams* are in the shape of an elephant head, *makara* head or a tiger head. From the collection of clay *chilams* the most interesting is the one having five *chilam* bowls attached to one smoking pipe. Such a *chilam* was devised for smoking various ingredients at a time.

A *hukka*, consists of four or five parts, namely the *hukka* base, in which the water is filled, the central pipe through which the smoke passes over the water, the top bowl for coal and tobacco and the smoking pipe. Usually the bowl is of clay, but in some cases the bowl is of metal. In some sophisticated ones there is even an ornate metal lid to cover the bowl. The central pipe is either of wood or of metal. The most important part is the base of a *hukka*. The base can be a simple hollowed coconut, a clay pot or a highly sophisticated and ornate bell-shaped vessel of metal having incised or incusted ornamentation. A large variety of *hukka* bases in the Museum include brass and copper bases, incusted and silver ones, and those made out of clay, coconut and glass.

## Spittoons

'King Bhima gave to Nala a spittoon which was very high and entirely made of rubies. Visvakarman had cordially presented it to king Bhima, perceiving Indra's esteem for him. On account of its halo of rays, beautiful as the rising high ascending sun, the people long thought: "It is full of the remains of chewed betel spat out by Nala, who is fond of betel".

— Śrīharṣa's *Naiṣadhīyacaritam*<sup>1</sup>

Spittoons are essentially connected with betel culture and their use must be as old as that of betel boxes and areca nut crackers. However, spitting becomes essential when tobacco is consumed along with betel leaf, the antiquity of using spittoon goes much farther back than the seventeenth century, when tobacco was introduced for the first time in India. Vātsyāyana in his *Kāmasutra* enumerates spittoon as one of the accessories to be kept near the bed. In many a miniature painting connected with romantic themes, spittoons are seen placed near or underneath the bed. The most common shape of an average Indian spittoon involves a circular bowl at the base and a large disc on top. This Museum possesses a fairly large collection of spittoons mainly of *bidri* work originating from Hyderabad area. Most of these spittoons are circular in shape, however a couple of them are square and rectangular. One rectangular piece even has a lid with a knob. Spittoons must have been an essential accessory of every Indian household, because it is one of the utensils brought as a dowry by every bride.





130.

130-133 Hookah bases with bidri work and engravings meant to please the eye of a smoker.



131



132



133



## Gunpowder cases

In the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum there is a small but remarkable collection of gunpowder cases. Some are made of brass or copper, one of a snail-shell and the rest carved out of wood. The latter variety is unique in the quality of carving and painting. It is noteworthy that most of the gunpowder cases which vary in material and originate from different areas, are all in the shape of a snail-shell. As at least one example indicates, perhaps earlier the original shells were used and that later, when metal or wood was employed, the design continued to imitate the prototype. An early eighteenth century work on Maratha polity<sup>2</sup> refers to 'huka', a vessel filled with gunpowder, 'dāru che bastē', gunpowder bags, and 'madkē', earthen pots filled with gunpowder. The word 'huka' is translated as 'shell', a word that is used for gunpowder cases and bombs both in English and American.

Ras Mala, The Hindoo Annals of the Province of Gujarat<sup>3</sup>, refers to the use of gunpowder by Mahomood Begurrah against the pirates of Bulsar by about A.D. 1488. The same ruler is described as having cannonaded the city of Champaner<sup>4</sup>. These are perhaps some of the earliest events connected with the use of gunpowder in India. In the following periods the Maratha, the Portuguese, the French and the British sources are filled with descriptions of the variety of guns, cannons and other firearms.

The gunpowder cases in this Museum are from the seventeenth century onwards. The carved wooden ones which are in the form of a coiled snail have a *makara*-like mouth, often with paintings of winged celestial beings or floral decorations. Some metal cases are in the shape of a horn. Most of the gunpowder cases in this collection are of Rajasthani origin.

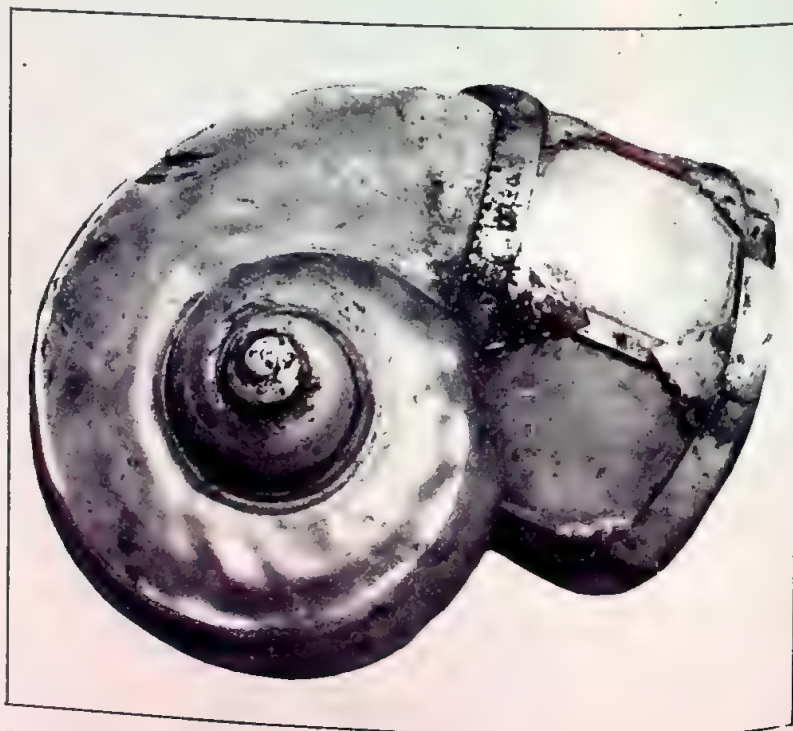
—JYOTINDRA JAIN.

### NOTES:

1. translation by K. K. Handiqui (Lahore, 1934), p. 228, vv. 27-28.
2. *Ājñapatra* by Ramacandrapant Amatya, referred to by P. K. Gode "The manufacture and use of firearms in India", in: *Bharatiya Vidya*, vol. IX, pp. 201 ff.
3. *Ras Mala*, by A. K. Forbes (repr. Delhi, 1973), p. 4
4. *ibid.* p. 288



134. Gunpowder case in the form of a coiled snail.



135. Gunpowder case in the shape of a snail-shell.



# Locks



136

136-138 Locks made by fantasies run riot.



137



138



## Musical instruments



139



140



141

139. *Magar Yazh: a string instrument, an Indian style harp conceived as a dolphin fish.*

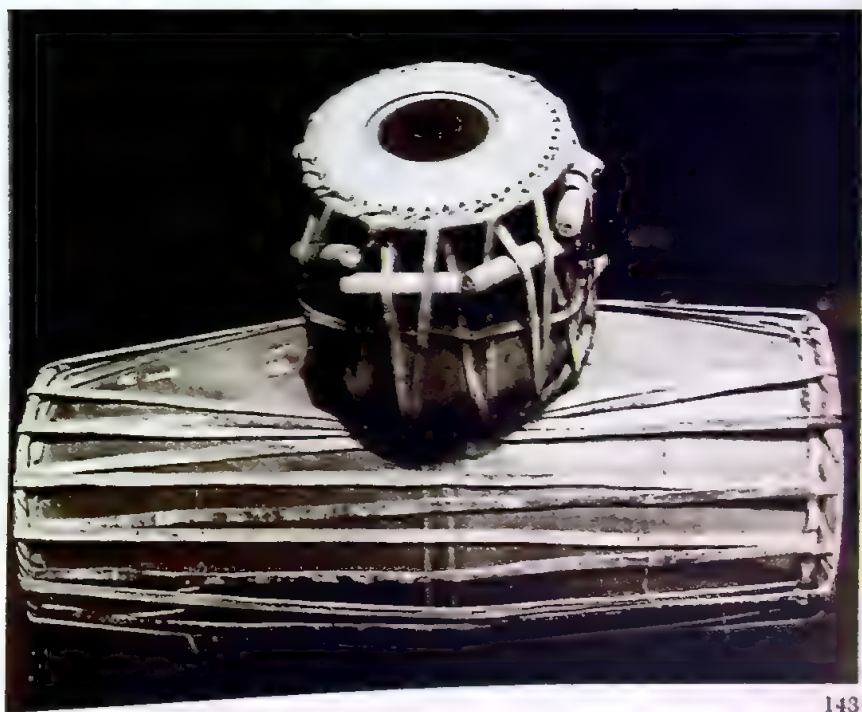
140. *Castanets probably used by royal orchestra.*

141. *Shehanais which seem to have travelled down from the north.*





142



143



144



142. Panchmukha Vadyam-(five-faced tablas).  
 143. Pushkaram: Pakhawaj with the tabla.  
 144. Earthernware based drums.



## Indoor games

A large number of dice and game pieces mainly connected with *chaupat* made of ivory, glass and metal as well as a variety of playing cards are among the indoor games represented in the Museum. The major sets of the playing cards are the circular variety of the Orissan papier maché type. Of these the most remarkable ones are those depicting the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu. Another series of cards which draw attention are the *navagraha*, the nine planets, series of Savantvadi area in Maharashtra. Since ages, Savantvadi is renowned for its painted and lacquered boxes, trays, plates and playing cards. A few examples of painted ivory cards also form a part of the collection.



145. *Navagraha* playing cards from Savantvadi.



# The Caitra-Gaurī Paṭa



Caitra-Gaurī is the festival in honour of goddess Gaurī (lit. 'the Fair-one', Śiva's consort) during the month of *caitra* (the Indian spring month between March-April). It is celebrated popularly among the women of Maharashtra. Throughout the month of *caitra* there is a celebration in honour of the goddess, who is also identified as the goddess of spring. It is believed that the goddess Gaurī comes to the house of her parents on the third of the bright half of the month of *caitra* and stays there for a month. She returns to her in-laws exactly after a month on the 3rd of the bright half of *vaiśākh* month. During the period of her stay, a painted *paṭa*, a panel, is sometimes installed in houses and temples. (See colour plate 12, p. 15.) She is worshipped with festivity and exchange of invitations and food.

One such painted panel (pigments on cloth) is preserved in the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum (roughly one and a half by one and a half metres of dimension). The centre of the *paṭa* is occupied by the seated deities Śiva and his consort Gaurī (or Pārvatī), who are flanked by divine pairs on both sides. On the right it is Viṣṇu and his consort Lakṣmī greeted by kneeling Garuḍa in *anjali mudrā* (with folded hands), on the left side it is Brahma and his consort who is holding *cakra*, the wheel, and *mālā*, the flower garland. These three pairs of deities are set into a house-like framework that again is surrounded by a wavy arch. The space in-between these two frameworks on top is occupied by a figure of Sarasvatī on the right and that of Gaṇeśa on the left side. In the upper corners, on each side, Balakṛṣṇa, child Kṛṣṇa lying on a leaf and sucking his toe, is depicted within vine scrolls with grapes in which monkeys are playing.

Beneath Śiva and Gaurī, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are shown within a group of *holi*-playing *gopis* sprinkling colour. On the right side of the row there is Garuḍa, and Hanumān is on the left. A devotee with a *thāli*, a plate, and offerings is shown to the left of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. The bottom row depicts various scenes connected with the Kṛṣṇa legend, like Kaliyadamana, the quelling of the snake king Kaliya, and *nāginīs*, his snake queens, who are begging to save their king's life with lamp offerings; Kṛṣṇa playing flute attended on both sides by *chauri* bearing girls; and cows, always connected with the Kṛṣṇa legend, on both corners. The lower edge of the *paṭa* is conceived as ocean which is inhabited by various sea-animals like fish, tortoise, snake, makara. The whole painting is surrounded by a narrow floral border.

The *paṭa* originates from Maharashtra and could be dated to the 19th century.

—JUTTA JAIN-NEUBAUER







# Citrakathi Paintings of Maharashtra

One of the earliest extensive collections of folk paintings from Maharashtra (Citrakathi paintings) is found in the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum. Shri Dinkar Kelkar was one of the first persons to note the value and uniqueness of these paintings, and over the years he collected about 800 most exquisite examples. These paintings are narrative in style, and it is clear that their place of origin is Maharashtra. In early years, when Shri Kelkar collected the first paintings in Paithan, he labelled these paintings, which he had acquired newly and for which no specific term or any other detail was known, as 'Paithan paintings', from the name of the town Paithan in north-eastern Maharashtra. Since that time many more of these paintings came to light and have aroused a good deal of interest. The term, however, thus introduced in the scholarly world, became the standard nomenclature for these paintings. The incidental fact that the first lot of these paintings, in a Maharashtra folk style, were acquired in Paithan, made the scholars believe that their origin was Paithan.

Further investigation in the matter has revealed that the term 'Paithan paintings' may be too limited because other Maharashtra paintings have been discovered which have little to do exclusively with the town or area of Paithan as such. Folk paintings have become available from many centres in Maharashtra, northern Karnataka and Andhra, and therefore the term 'Paithan paintings' which suggests that Paithan was only one centre, among many, where they were painted. Today there is not a single family of Citrakathi painters living in Paithan.<sup>1</sup>

Another very important location of Citrakathis is the area of Savantvadi in southern Maharashtra, where still some ten families of traditional painters are living, who have, however, more or less given up their occupation of painting and taken to other professions.

Savantvadi, a former princely state, has been famous since early days for its exquisite wood and lacquer work. Very close to Savantvadi, in the small village of Pinguli the Citrakathis still continue their tradition.<sup>2</sup> These Citrakathis have been settled at Pinguli for generations, although by their original occupations they were travelling from place to place entertaining audiences with their picture-sets and stories.

From the existing material it at once becomes clear that the Citrakathi tradition is in no way homogeneous. It is apparent that the Citrakathi groups of northern, central or south-western Maharashtra had their own specific expression of style in the paintings, although the basic features of their ethnic identity, of their mode of living and earning their livelihood, and of their occupation with story-telling and painting the corresponding illustrations, is the same throughout the community of Citrakathis of Maharashtra. One can easily imagine that the regional variations were due to individual experiments, capabilities and creations which got established as the peculiar style of a family or clan in a certain village. Comparing the styles of the Citrakathis from Pinguli and the other traditions, earlier styled as 'Paithan painting', the peculiarity of each style is at once evident.

The style of the paintings from Pinguli reveals a close heritage to the early wall paintings of Lepakṣi (c.A.D. 1540) and of Virūpakṣa temple of Hampi (15th century). The folk paintings of Pinguli are drawn in a fine black outline and with much care for facial features and for texture and designs of the costumes. They virtually do not depict background, but the areas in between the depicted figures are left blank.

On the other hand, the Citrakathi paintings in this Museum resemble very much the style of the Andhra leather puppets. They are bold in outline. They have strong colours and are more roughly executed than those of Pinguli village. The outline is thicker and hardly any area on the sheet is left blank, but the fondness of covering the whole sheet with figures,



animals, trees, architectural frameworks, rocks, utensils, basements of seats or the ground in the lower edge and bundles of grass, reveals the 'horror vacui' of many paintings in a folkish style. The eyes, the most prominent facial feature in the pictures of the Dinkar Kelkar Museum, having a black dot in the middle makes the eye look protruding and with a stern glance, whereas in the paintings of Pinguli, the eyes are more realistic, fish shaped and pleasing in the impact. The outline of the forehead, the nose, the lips, the chin and the moustache, however, are similar, in both types. Another striking similarity between both the types of paintings is the execution of a fighting scene, where a warrior is often depicted surrounded by a circle of arrows.

The people who did these paintings belong to the specific caste of travelling story-tellers. Because they also did the paintings illustrating the stories they were narrating, they were called Citrakathi, i.e. 'the tellers of illustrated (stories)'. The Citrakathi were a wandering folk, who earned their livelihood by going from village to village, narrating various vernacular legends and showing the related paintings in the market places or bazaars. Because these paintings are necessarily connected with the community of Citrakathi, the term "Citrakathi paintings of Maharashtra" or "Folk paintings of the Citrakathi of Maharashtra" would be much more appropriate than the term 'Paithan paintings'. For specification, one might use terms as 'Citrakathi paintings of Pinguli' or 'Citrakathi paintings of Savantvadi', etc.

The Citrakathi, the migrating community of story-tellers, were found once all over Maharashtra and some parts of Andhra and Karnataka. A few of them are still occupied, in travelling around in those areas from village to village, with their bundles of paintings, although they do not produce new paintings any more. Until some years ago, they occasionally used to travel, unpack their paintings and start their performance. Mostly it was at the market place of a village, where many people get together to see and listen to the katha. Sometimes they were called to perform at the houses of the royal nobility or wealthy patrons. On a stick the performer held up a pair of paintings pasted back to back against each other. As any occupation or undertaking is to be initiated by an invocation of God Gaṇeśa or Gaṇapati, in popular mind the god who removes all the obstacles for the proposed undertaking, the story-telling began with displaying a picture of the elephant-headed god Gaṇeśa, seated on a low stool and being flanked by two female attendants and a musician with a trumpet. Goddess Sarasvatī with her *viṇa* and a peacock as her *vāhana* (vehicle), it is believed, is present in all literary occupations and therefore is also to be invoked for her favour and support for a story-telling session. The performer took up one pair of paintings after the other and narrated the corresponding story, while pointing out the incidents on the paintings. As he continued he twisted the stick around and showed the other side depicting either another aspect of the same incident or the next one. Then he took up the next pair of paintings and proceeded in the same manner till the end.

The stories that the Citrakathis have been narrating are apparently related to the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. But these were not taken from the standardised grand epics composed in Sanskrit. The Citrakathi stories sprang from the local oral traditions, which were prevalent in Maharashtra. These stories were preserved in the oral tradition and were transferred from generation to generation. These might be the remote remnants of the same 'raw material', which went in to provide themes to the sanskritic epics at some stage. The Citrakathi paintings are true folk paintings, as they do not necessarily depict the incidents as described in the versions of the high sanskritic tradition, but they derive their subject matter and inspiration from the local oral tradition. Besides the themes connected with these, there were other popular folk legends that were narrated by the Citrakathi.



A number of stories which were narrated by the Citrakathi which seem to be connected with the *Mahabharata* are actually taken from a local Marathi epic called the 'Paṇḍavaprātāpa', or the 'Glory of the Paṇḍavas' of which a written version by poet Shridhar originates from the early 18th century.

The incident of Babhruvāhana of the Paṇḍavaprātāpa forms one of the most exciting picture-stories in the collection of this Museum. The entire incident runs as follows: Yaddhiṣṭhira, the Paṇḍava king, launches a royal horse-sacrifice to establish universal supremacy. Arjuna was in charge of protecting the royal horse. His son Babhruvāhana detained the royal horse and challenged his father's army. He destroyed most of the army and in order to kill Arjuna, he, in the guise of Sūrya's grandson Varasketu, approached Sūrya and brought five supernatural arrows to kill the five Paṇḍavas. With the Sūrya-arrow he killed Arjuna. Finally due to Kṛṣṇa's intervention, Babhruvāhana went to the netherworld and brought nectar from the serpent king Sesa and brought Arjuna back to life.

Other paintings in the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum related to the Paṇḍavaprātāpa illustrate such incidents as 'Abhimanyu Vatsala haraṇa', the story of Abhimanyu and the capture of Vatsala; 'Rukminīsvayamvara', the self-chosen marriage of Rukminī; and the Hariścandra, story which narrates the adventure of Hariścandra, his wife Tārāmātī and his son Rohidās. The paintings in the Museum connected with the Rāma legend illustrate such incidents as the 'Lankādahana', the burning of Lankā; 'Lavāṅkuśa', the story of the brothers Lava and Kuśa, Rāma's children; and 'Rāmavijaya', the victory of Rāma.

One of the characteristic features of these paintings is their bold and powerful drawing in black outline. The human figures are shown both in profile and in front view, whereas the animals are simply shown in profile. The heads and legs of human figures are in profile, whereas the upper body, the chest part and the arms are shown in front view. The breasts of men are indicated by half circular lines and some skinfolds underneath on both sides. Normally, the male figures have a big belly bulging over the girdle of their *dhoti* as a sign of their well-to-do status. The figures are stout with voluminous hips, thighs and legs.

The faces are stereotyped with a high forehead, a prominent pointed nose, a curve for the mouth and one for the chin. A red line indicates the lips, which are always closed. The eyes of humans and animals are the most typical feature of these paintings. They are conceived as large white circles marked by a black dot in the centre as the pupil. Minute triangles are added on two sides to give the eye an elongated almond shape. The eyebrow is crowning the eye in a double curved line. The ears are rather fanciful formations of three ringlets with attached large earrings.

One striking feature of the paintings is the dominance of reddish and reddish-brown colours. With only a limited range of red, light-red, blue, green, black and yellow, a highly dramatic effect is obtained. The faces and bodies of the persons of higher status are mostly painted in a pinkish red. If a special character is depicted, like Kṛṣṇa or Rāma, his body colour is a dark blue, which is usually the case in most folk styles of paintings. The figures of attendants or servants are also depicted in a blue colour to indicate their origin from a lower social rank.

There is no conception of geometric perspective at all and no indication of any depth dimension. It is characteristic of these paintings to depict the death of a figure or animal by showing closed eyes.

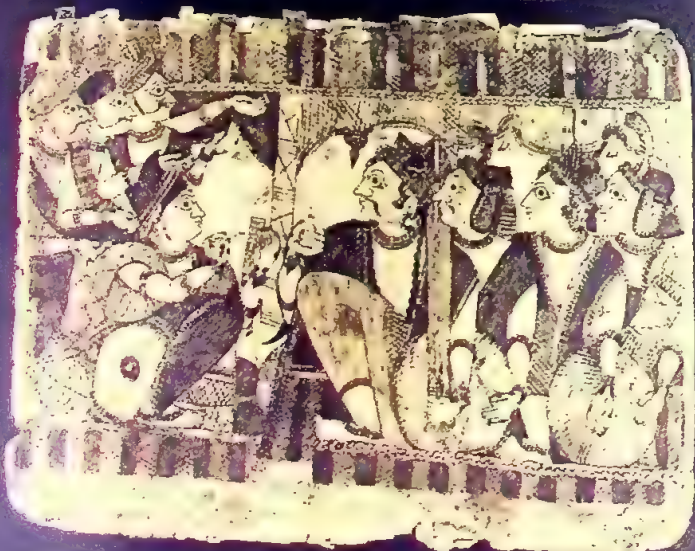
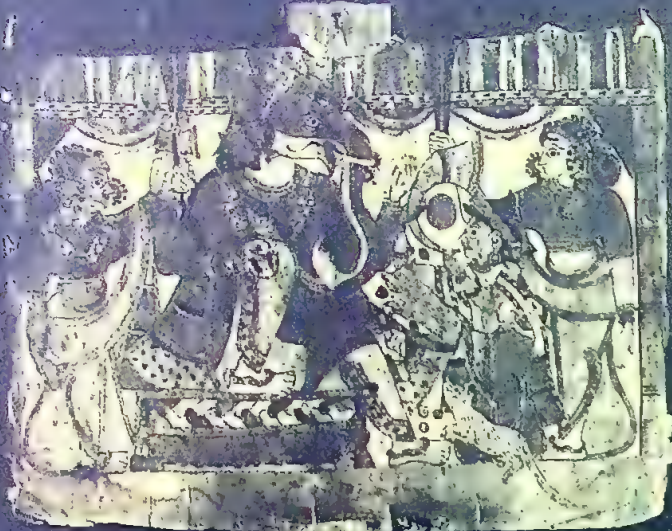
The oldest examples of these paintings are in all probability not earlier than 250 years. However, quite a few are of later period and even contemporary.

—JUTTA JAIN-NEUBAUER

1. Information Shri D. Kelkar, Pune

2. Information regarding Pinguli painting is derived from the calendar of Government of Maharashtra, 1978, prepared with introduction by Baburao Sadwelkar.





## The horse sacrifice

- 1-3 First is invoked Ganapati, attended by two maids.  
Then is praised Saraswati, with the peacock.  
Sage Vyas narrates the story of the Ashwamedha, horse  
sacrifice, to King Janamejaya, grandson of the Pandavas.







8



9

4-13 Sage Vyas advised Yudhishtira to perform horse sacrifice.

An assembly was called and was attended by Shri Krishna, the five Pandavas and Draupadi.

Shri Krishna said to Bheema, 'Go to King Yavanatha and get his horse with black ears (Shyamakarna).

We shall perform the horse sacrifice.'

Bheema, Varasketu and Meghavarna started for Yavanatha's capital. Disguised as Brahmins, they approached Yavanatha.

He greeted them and said, 'O holy Brahmins, can you tell what has affected my horse?'

'Show us the horse', said the Brahmins.

On seeing the horse they advised,

'Let it drink the water of Dudumbhi tank.'

Accordingly, the horse was led to the tank.

Meghavarna assumed the form of a huge bird and flew away with the horse. Yavanatha's army attacked Varasketu.

Meghavarna brought the horse to Bheema and requested him to help Varasketu fight the king's army.

Bheema took a huge club and pounded the enemy.

Yavanatha himself entered the battlefield.

But he was defeated by Varasketu. He said,

'I captured this horse from Surya. Now I am dishonoured. I offer my daughter to you in marriage, and the horse as dowry.'

Varasketu married the princess.



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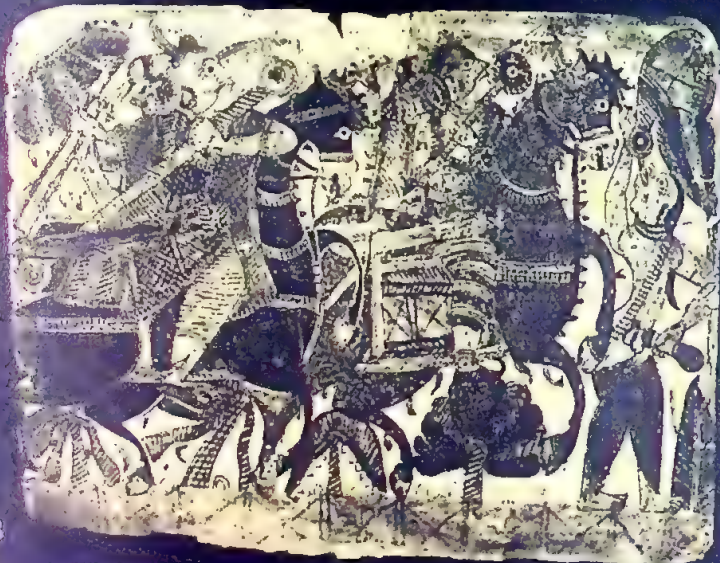
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14-27 He and his bride brought the horse to Hastinapura. Shri Krishna and the Pandavas greeted them warmly. Shri Krishna said, 'Let the horse wander freely for one year to proclaim Yudhishtira's sovereignty. He, who bars its path, will have to fight Pandavas' mighty warriors or surrender.'

At an auspicious moment, the horse was set free. Arjuna, accompanied by Varasketu, Prativeda and Meghavarna, and supported by a huge army, was to protect the horse. The horse entered a forest. A tiger tried to attack it. It was killed by the horsemen.

The horse then entered a forest in Manipur. Babhravahana asked his mother Chitrlekha, permission to hunt in the forest. On entering the forest, he saw Shyamakarna and held it. The Pandava army demanded his surrender. He said, 'I shall read the golden plate on its forehead and then decide.'

The plate carried the name of Arjuna. Babhravahana was in a dilemma. If he kept the horse, he would have to fight Arjuna—*his father*. If he released it without fighting, it would be a disgrace to a Kshatriya. After pondering for a while, he refused to release the horse and prepared to fight. He routed the Pandava army and rode away with the horse.

Arjuna received the news. 'It is impossible', he said, 'to regain the horse, if Babhravahana has captured it.' Babhravahana brought the horse to his mother's palace. Mother, he shouted, 'I have captured the Shyamakarna of Pandavas.' But, do you realise what you have done?', she asked apprehensively. You will have to fight the mightiest warrior on earth—Arjuna, your father. No, No. I can't bear to lose my son nor my husband. Go, surrender to your father.'





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32

28-41 To obey his mother, Babhruvahana led the horse to Arjuna. 'Father, I have come to surrender', he said, touching Arjuna's feet.

Arjuna got wild with anger, and kicked him in the chest. 'You are not *my* son. If you were, you would not have surrendered. You must be the son of a whore.'

Babhruvahana thundered, 'You have insulted my mother and me—a Kshatriya. Now meet me on the battle-field. If you don't, it will be a shame on your family.'

He rode away with the horse.

The Pandava army pursued him.

Prativeda, son of Shri Krishna, was the first to attack. But Babhruvahana cut his head off and hurled it up to heaven. Arjuna sent Sayega, Yavanatha's son, next. The battle lasted for fourteen days. Sayega was killed in the end. Then Meghavarna took up arms. After a battle of seven days, Meghavarna lost his life.

Aniruddha, son of Ghatotkacha, entered the battle-field.



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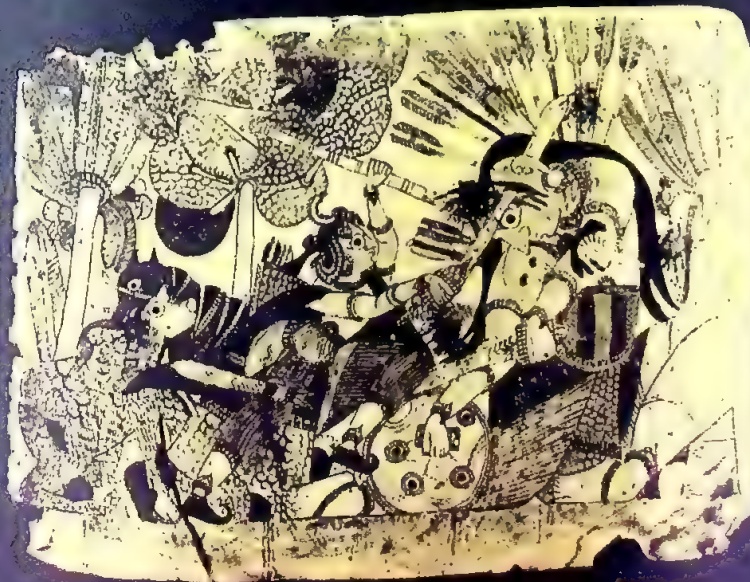
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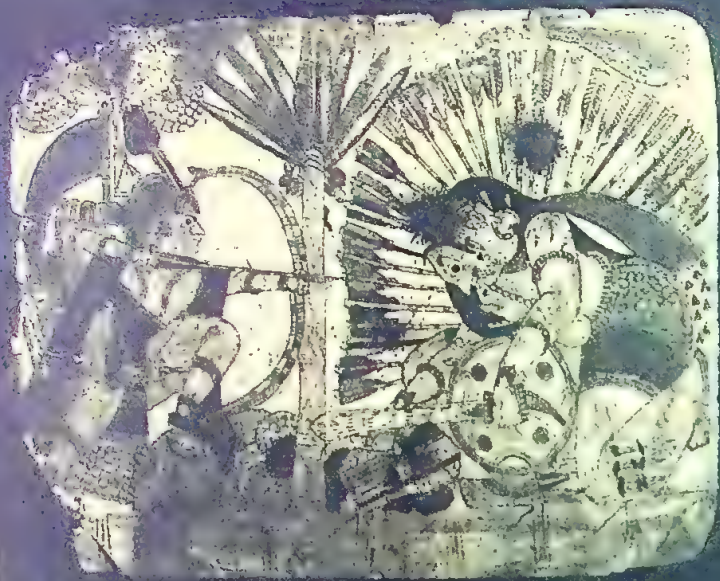


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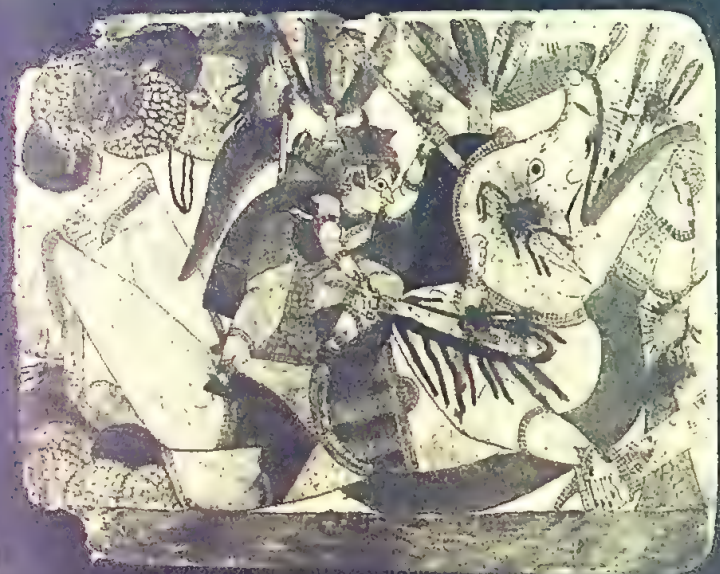




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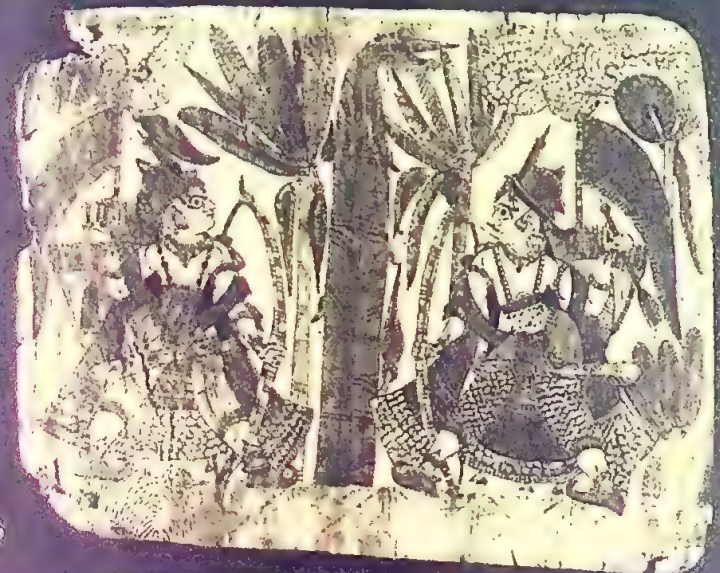
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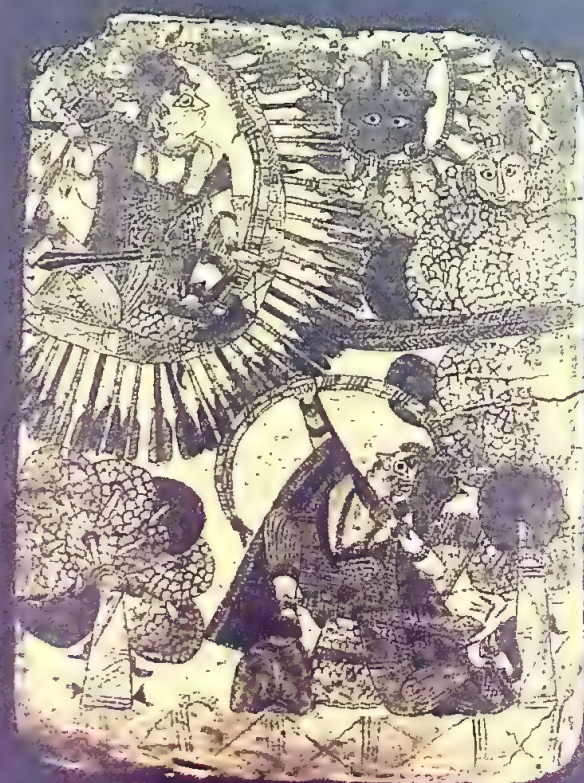


46

42-55 Making a cage of arrows around him, Babhruvahana captured him. Anudhautya, son of the demon Baka, rushed at Babhruvahana. In a single combat, Babhruvahana severed the demon's head. Arjuna received the terrifying news of the death of his stalwarts. Varasketu offered to face Babhruvahana, who greeted him with Oh, you have come at last, my revered Cousin!



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49

The battle started. Varasketu created a cage of arrows around Babhruvahana and sent him flying to Surya. Babhruvahana lied to Surya that he was Varasketu, Surya's grandson, and took from him five arrows to kill the five Pandavas. He came down, and fighting Varasketu, cut off his head, which flew and came in Babhruvahana's hand to meet him. Then it flew to Arjuna. Sad at heart, Arjuna attacked Babhruvahana, who chided him with, "Are all the Pandava warriors dead, that you have come? You called my mother a whore. Now I shall show you of what blood I am." Both started flinging arrows at each other.



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56-68 With an arrow obtained from Surya, Babhruvahana cut off Arjuna's head. Victorious, he came to his mother. 'I have killed Arjuna, Mother. I have avenged you.' 'Yes, and you have widowed me and your step-mothers. Don't show me your face', she cried.

Babhruvahana went to the lamenting Pandavas. Shri Krishna advised him to get nectar from Shesha, the serpent king. Babhruvahana approached Shesha; but Shesha refused to part with the nectar.

Babhruvahana challenged Shesha to a fight.

The serpents came hissing, but he recited the mongoose-chant. Thousands of mongooses attacked the serpents. Shesha surrendered and gave the nectar. Babhruvahana brought the bowl of nectar to Shri Krishna, who asked him to get the heads of Arjuna and other Pandava warriors from heaven.



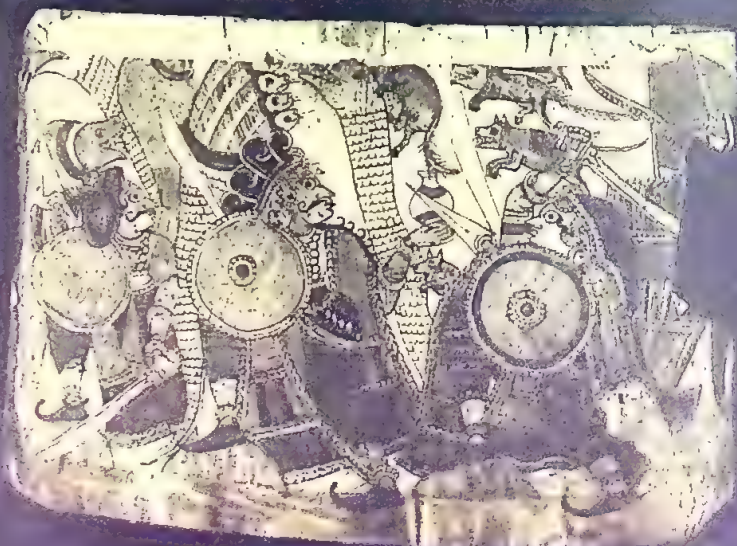
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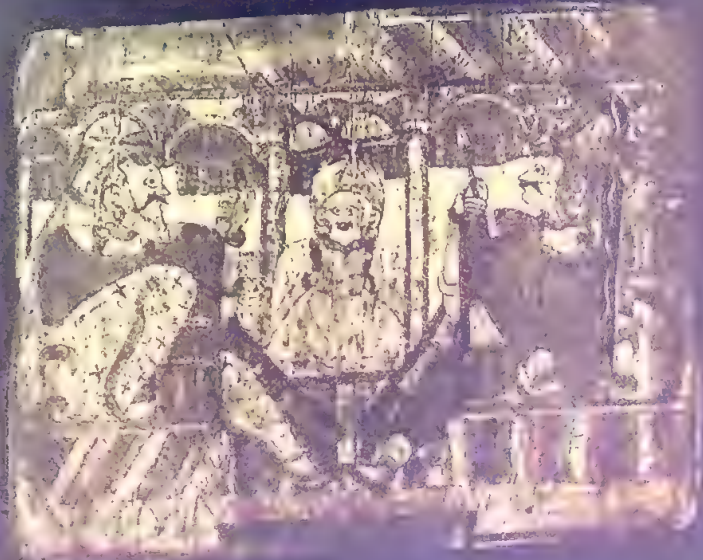
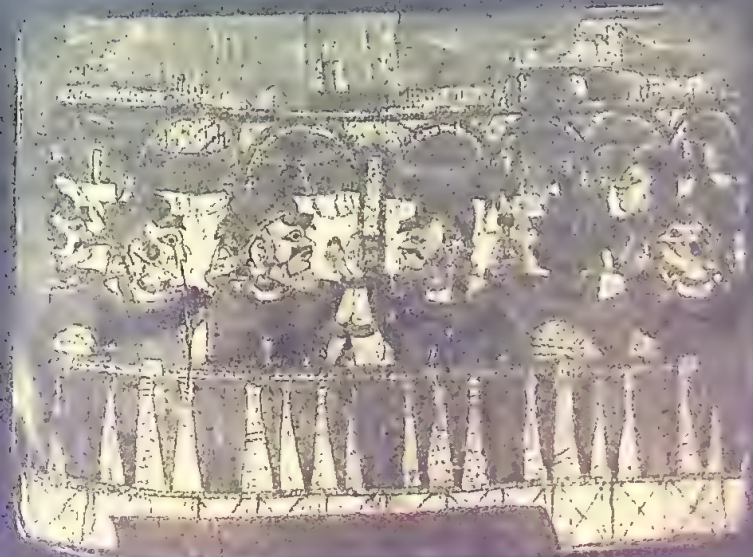


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66

Babhruvahana shot a note on an arrow to Brahma.  
The heads were promptly sent down. They were then  
placed on the respective bodies and drops of nectar  
put in the mouths. All came to life.  
Arjuna embraced Babhruvahana with pride and affection.  
Shri Krishna embraced Prativeda, his son.  
And Draupadi took Varasketu,  
son of Karna, in her arms.  
Accompanied by Chitralekha and Babhruvahana,  
the Pandavas brought the horse back to Hastinapur.  
The horse sacrifice was duly performed.  
Sage Vyas thus concludes the story of Ashwamedha.



67





*A lamp in the form of a ball, with floral perforations. North India. C. early 20th Century.*



# Metallurgy and Metal-Working in India

*'An image of gold gives welfare;  
of silver, renown;  
of copper, prosperity,  
of brass, offspring —  
but the seers say that he should not  
cause an image of Viṣṇu  
to be made out of this metal.'*

Kasyapajnanakanda<sup>1</sup>

The major part of the collection of the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum consists of a large variety of metal lamps, icons, ritual spoons, betel boxes, lime containers, nut-crackers, ink-wells, kitchen accessories, locks, etc. For this reason a brief historical outline and survey of technical procedures of metal working becomes necessary.

Some of the earliest traceable archaeological evidences of metal work are the copper tools found from pre-Harappan sites of Baluchistan and Makran areas. Several copper and bronze antiquities have been discovered from Harappa and Mohenjodaro including the famous bronze figure of the so-called 'dancing girl'. Apart from forging and hammering, whether casting was known or not is uncertain. From the details of the 'dancing girl' it appears that it was cast.

From the literary evidence of the description of the R̥gveda it appears that copper and bronze smithy was a specialised science and that the craftsmen were esteemed high and were appreciated. In R̥gveda one comes across the word *ayas* which, though later on came to mean iron, in that period probably denoted bronze and/or copper. No definite archaeological evidence of an iron object belonging to early Vedic period is found.

The next important literary source to throw a flood of light on types of metals, techniques and metal smiths and other craftsmen is Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī (pre-Mauryan) and the Mahābhāṣya of Pāṇjali (Pāṇini's commentator, 2nd century B.C.). On the archaeological front no significant finds are recorded from pre-Mauryan and Mauryan periods.

From the first century onwards there is an unbroken chain of metal antiquities. A Pārśva-nātha bronze in the Prince of Wales Museum and another one found from Chausa, Bihar (Patna Museum), belong to the post-Mauryan period. Of the same period is the famous silver casket of Kanishka's age.

A rich bulk of literary references and archaeological finds appears in the Gupta period. Agni-purāṇa and Matsyapurāṇa give detailed information on metal casting. The famous examples of metal work of Gupta period are the copper statues of Sultangañj Buddha, some of the Ākoṭa bronzes found from a mound near Baroda (Gujarat)<sup>2</sup> and the renowned Mehrauli Pillar of Chandragupta II, a 23 feet high pillar of single piece of iron which is a metallurgical wonder, as it has not rusted till today.

In the following periods the most remarkable are the Pāla and Chola bronzes. The latter especially attained the climax of the art of metal casting in India. The 16th century life-size bronzes of Kṛṣṇa Deva Rāya and his two queens standing in the temple of Tirumalai deserve mention, as representative examples of the graceful work that continued to be made till so late.

The above survey only provides a scanty outline of the major milestones of the art of metal working in India. Alongside there must have been hundreds of local metal smiths scattered all over India, who must have produced innumerable objects of veneration, votive figures, ritual



accessories, ornaments, betel boxes, toilet bottles, lamps, incense burners, utensils, etc. The craftsmen who produced the great recorded masterpieces for royal patronage came from the same stock as those who humbly and silently catered to the needs of the rural mass. They made their objects with great care and love and when worn out and discarded by the users, melted them with equal ruthlessness and detachment. This repetitive process of melting away the old and creating the new has kept the tradition not only continuous but also growing, evolving.

### Technical Procedures

Three basic methods of metal working known traditionally in India are: hammering, forging and casting. These three techniques seem to be in use in India from the middle of the 3rd millennium B.C. As is evident from the large archaeological yields of metal objects from the various sites of Harappa culture the techniques of hammering and forging in any case, and that of casting with some doubt were known from the days of the Indus Valley Civilisation.

*Hammering.* Most kitchen and ritual utensils, boxes, betel cases, lime containers etc. are manufactured in various parts of the country by hammering thin sheets of copper, brass and other metals. Depending upon the level of advancement of technology, at various places, three different methods of obtaining metal sheets are known. The most primitive one is that of preparing a metal sheet by smithing semi-molten ingots of metal on stone. In some parts brass-sheets are prepared by casting, wherein moulds of clay mixed with husk are prepared in the shape and size of the required sheet. In towns and cities there are large factories which manufacture sheets of different metals which are available in different proportions of metals and in different thicknesses.

In the first two cases of preparing metal sheets the craftsman takes care from the beginning to remain closer to the required shape and size. In the case where large ready-made metal sheets are used a drawing of the required shape is prepared with a pointed iron needle and then it is cut out.

After the flat sheet is brought roughly to the required shape, the process of hammering to give depth and three-dimensionality begins. In modern times the required hollowing or raising is often done in press machines. There are two ways of constructing utensils out of metal sheets. In some cases like those of a plate or a simple bowl only one piece of metal sheet is required which is hollowed or raised to the required shape by beating with a wooden hammer. But most utensils, betel boxes, lime containers, lamps etc. are composed of several parts. For example in a betel box the lid, the box, the inner tiers, the inner smaller lids for compartments and the legs if any, are separately made and are joined together. Often some parts like the lid and the box are made by hammering, but others like the legs or the handle are solid cast. A traditional water pitcher is usually made in three parts, i.e. the base, the 'shoulder', and the 'neck', which are soldered together to make a narrow mouth and a broad-bodied pitcher. Often betel boxes, worshipper's trays and lamps have decorative intricate perforation (*jāli*) work. Before beating the sheet, the designs of perforation are carved through with a chisel. Often an iron punch or a dye with required designs is placed on the sheet and hammered through the sheet which leaves decorative holes in it.

*Forging:* The technique of forging metals and moulding them to the required shape and size can be applied to copper, brass, gold, silver, iron, etc., but for iron it is the only suitable technique, whereas other metals can also be worked by beating or casting. It is not that iron cannot be cast, but ordinarily it is difficult to cast iron, because it requires very high temperature to melt it. Whereas for copper melting  $1083^{\circ}\text{C}$  is sufficient, for iron at least  $1540^{\circ}\text{C}$  is required. It is basically due to this and other technical difficulties of constant repetitive heating that iron age came much later to India than the Harappan chalcolithic period. Different communities of *luhar*, blacksmiths, in different parts of India today practise iron forging, and repair of tools



of farmers, carpenters, cart wrights, stone workers and other craftsmen is handled skilfully by the blacksmiths with tools of limited quality and quantity. Iron blades, knives, edges of nut-crackers, kitchen implements like coconut cutters, vegetable cutters, screw drivers, saws, chisels, nails and the rims of the wheel of a cart cannot be substituted by comparatively softer metals like copper or brass.

However, copper and brass are also often worked by forging. After casting or cutting in the required shape, pieces of the metal are forged by heating and hammering to mould them to specific objects or their parts. Brass or copper chains for swings or for nut-crackers etc., are often forged rather than cast.

*Casting: Cire perdue* or 'the lost form' method of metal casting seems to have been universal in India from at least proto-historic times.<sup>3</sup> There are two methods of metal casting, i.e. solid casting and hollow casting. Both the methods are well known all over India still, but solid casting seems to have been traditionally more popular in the South, whereas in the Central and Eastern regions hollow casting has been widely practised. For solid casting a replica of the image to be cast is prepared in wax in minute details. Over this replica a fine layer of clay is applied. The inner side of this layer acquires accurate impression of the wax image. Later two to three other thicker layers of clay are applied over the inner layer. When this is ready, the joint-mould (of wax and clay) is heated so that the inner wax replica melts and runs out through a hole kept for the purpose. Since the inner form is 'lost' due to heating, the process is called *cire perdue* or 'lost form'. Now, through the same hole molten metal is poured which spreads in every nook and corner of the inner hollow and settles there. After some time when it cools down, the clay mould is broken and the cast image is obtained. The image is then finished in which the casting blemishes are removed by filing.

In the hollow casting method the primary or the first mould is a clay replica. This mould is covered by wax wire (prepared from pliant wax by pressing through a cylindrical tube having a hole at the bottom). All the surface details that are envisaged in the final product are made with wax wire on the upper surface. Over the wax layer another fine clay layer is placed. This layer is later padded with two to three thicker layers of clay. At one spot a hole is left for wax to run out. When molten metal is poured in the space where there is a wax layer between the primary and the upper clay layers the hot metal displaces the wax and occupies the vacated space. When cool, the clay model is broken to obtain a hollow cast image or object.

Since the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum has the finest collection of Indian nut-crackers, I shall elaborate a few points here on the technique of casting them as observed in Jamnagar, Gujarat. From the original model (which is either an old nut-cracker or a newly made model for further replicas) a mould is prepared. The original model which is to be copied is in two parts, i.e. the part with the cutting edge and the part acting as butt. From the former part the cutting blade is removed while making a mould. A mixture of alluvial river soil and molasses is prepared and filled in an oval-shaped thick iron frame. When still wet the parts of the original model of the cracker are pressed inside the clay frame. The soft clay obtains in recession the impression of the protruding details of the part. When the part is removed, the recessed negative mould in clay is ready. Then dry molten metal is poured in the mould to obtain the replica. After the parts are thus ready, an iron blade is fixed to the cutting lever and the two parts are joined at the top with a rivet so that the instrument is ready for its function.

The technical limitation of the *cire perdue* casting method, which compels the metal smith to model a new wax replica each time a metal object is to be produced, "results in establishing that continuum of creative tensions and visual excitement so important for the artisan to experience. This, when coupled with the exaltations released by the religious significance of the objects and his hereditary virtuosity in craft skill, inevitably makes for the creation a meaningful art."<sup>4</sup>



## Surface Ornamentation

After the object is made by any of the methods, i.e. beating, forging, or casting, the finishing is undertaken to remove the blemishes, to impart the final surface ornamentation and texture. Often the minute lines of facial and other bodily features and general expressions are added to the sacred and secular image with the help of fine chisels. Details of drapery or floral and geometric incisions on any part of the object are also incised with a chisel.

Sometimes the base of the pot is made of copper and the shoulder and neck of brass or *vice versa*, which when fixed together imparts curious colour scheme to the pot and is held sacred by Hindus under the popular name of *gaṅgā-jamnī* pot. The name derives from the fact that in Hindu mythology the river Jumna (Yamuna) is supposed to be having dark waters and the river Gaṅgā white waters. Thus, due to the dark copper part and the lighter brass part the pot has acquired such a name. Often one metal is inlaid over the other for pleasant design and colour scheme.

Sometimes embossed decorative brass and copper plaques are made which are used as surface decorations over the wooden chests, doors, windows, etc.

## Incrusted Ware

*Bidri* ware is the popular name of the gold and silver inlaid dark metal utensils, mainly *hukka* bottoms, betel plates, spittoons, surahis, as also sword handles and shields.

The term *bidri* ware or *bidri* work is derived from the name of the town Bidār in the territory of the former Nizam of Hyderabad, where the work was initially done. Today any ware done with incrustation, be it from Hyderabad, Banaras, Lucknow, Murshidabad, Purnia, or parts of Kashmir is popularly known as *bidri* work.

The utensils of Hyderabad contained 24 parts of tin and one of copper, those of Lucknow had a high percentage of zinc and mild proportion of lead, tin and copper.<sup>5</sup> In Murshidabad no lead is used. Due to the metals used the *bidri* ware looks dark, does not rust and is heavy in weight. The vessel is first roughly moulded and then brought to the exact form on the turning lathe. After that the required motifs are chiselled on the surface. 'It is thereafter smoothed, polished and coloured to a dark green or black colour by means of a paste made by sal ammoniac and saltpetre, moistened in rape seed oil and thickened with charcoal.'<sup>6</sup>

The two forms of *bidri* work are known as *tehnasān* (deeply cut work) and *zar buland* (raised work).

In *tehnasān* the designs are deeply engraved and the gold or silver pieces are inlaid in the trenches.

Sir George Watt gives the following description of *zar buland* technique: 'The outline of the pattern is engraved, the silver leaf held over and rubbed with the finger until a tracing of the design is imparted. The leaf is then cut into the desired pieces, each a little larger than the space it is intended to cover. The margin or rim of each is bent over, and the cavity thus formed filled with a piece of soft lead. This is next inverted over the space and it is hammered or punched all round, so as to cause the surface metal to embrace and fix the applied piece. The process is then finished by the silver leaf being punched or chased on the surface in completion of the desired pattern.'<sup>7</sup>

## NOTES:

—JYOTINDRA JAIN

1. chap. 56. Kaśyapa's book of Wisdom, transl. T. Goudriaan, The Hague, 1965, p. 165

2. publ. U. P. Shah, *Ākoṭa Bronzes*, Bombay 1959

3. for detailed information see Ruth Reeves, *Cire perdue Casting in India*, Crafts Museum, New Delhi, 1962

4. *ibid.* p. 15.

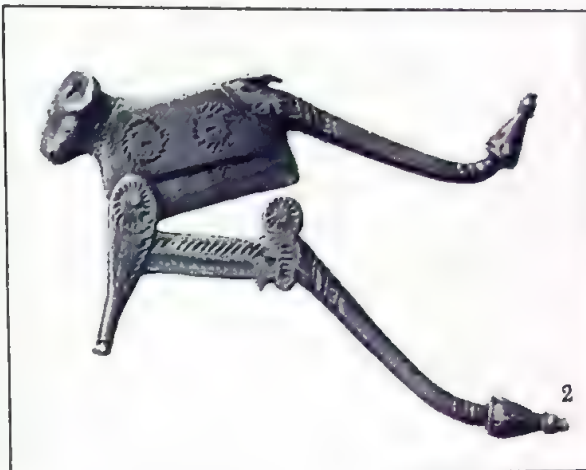
5. G. Watt, *Indian Art at Delhi*, Calcutta 1903, pp. 46–47

6. *ibid.* p. 47

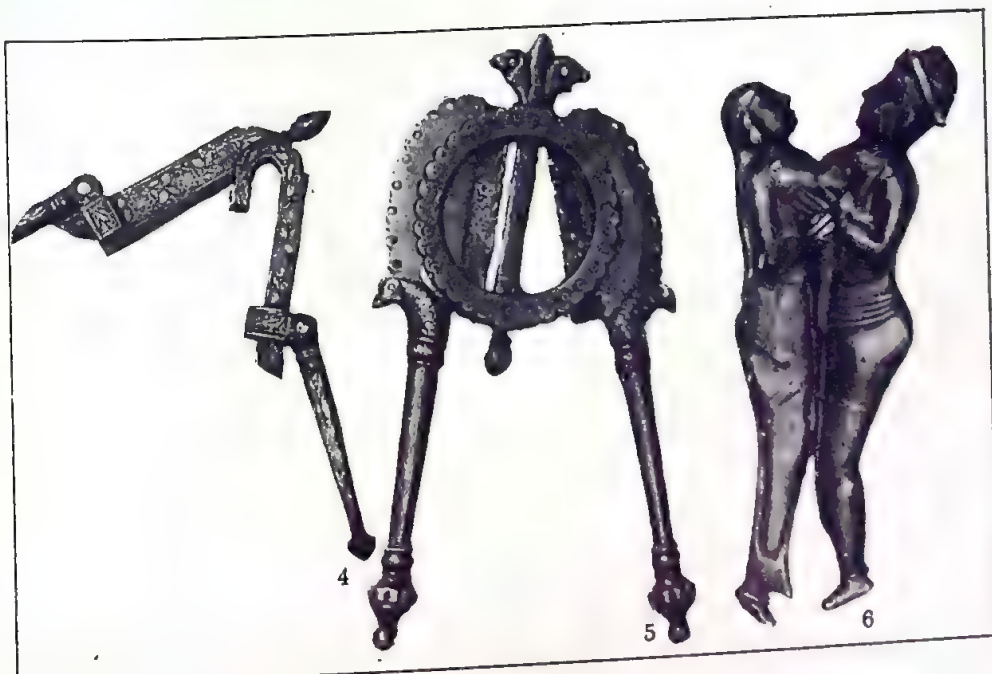
7. *ibid.* pp. 47–48



1. Brass nut-cracker; the figure of a lion with a raised tail on the cutting lever  
Maharashtra, c. early 19th century
2. Brass nut-cracker; the figure of a ram indicative of Mesa zodiac sign  
Maharashtra, c. early 19th century
3. Nut-cracker showing Sesasayin Bhagwan Vishnu with attendants including a figure of Hanuman  
Maharashtra, c. late 18th century
4. Nut-cracker in bidri-work  
Andhra, early 20th century
5. Brass nut-cracker with decorative floral and bird motif  
Maharashtra, 19th century
6. Brass nut-cracker, in the form of an erotic couple  
Maharashtra, early 19th century
7. Brass nut-cracker, with the phoenix style  
Maharashtra, early 19th century
8. Brass erotic nut-cracker  
Maharashtra, late 18th century
9. A multi-purpose nut-cracker-cum-dagger  
early 19th century



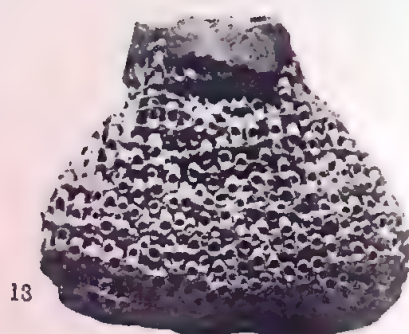
## CATALOGUE





10. Vajri, with a decorative peacock  
Maharashtra, 19th century
11. Vajri, with a sturdy horse,  
Gujarat, 19th century
12. Vajri, having a handle with a dragon  
in flight  
Bengal, 19th century
13. A coral Vajri
14. Vajri, a foot-scrubber of brass with a  
figure of mother and child  
Maharashtra, 19th century
15. Vajri, with the seated monkey hearing  
no evil,

- Rajasthan, early 20th century
16. Vajri, with decorative bird combined with  
surma container and arrangement for the  
mirror, and also a stone for scrubbing  
(very rare)  
Maharashtra, early 18th century
17. Vajri, brass foot-scrubber with two girls  
playing Fugadi  
Gujarat, 19th century
18. Vajri, brass foot-scrubber with the  
figure of a dog  
Maharashtra, early 19th century



14 15 16



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19. Tambula brass box, in which each bowl is in the form of a woman's head, central one being larger than the surrounding ones  
Bengal, 19th century
20. Wooden spice box, with four carved parrots on the lid  
Gujarat, early 20th century
21. Wooden spice box, carved with double circular containers over which there is a lid which rotates around a pivot  
Gujarat, contemporary

22. Clay water pot, in the form of a fish, with a lid  
Maharashtra, contemporary
23. Hair dryer with a standing woman figure with a coconut oil container  
Kerala, 19th century
24. Perfume and toilet bottles of glass



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- 25. Glass jar for perfume with cut-glass cap  
early 20th century
- 26. Gunpowder box, carved and painted with  
the figure of a winged celestial being  
Rajasthan, 19th century
- 27. Highly decorative gunpowder box.
- 28. Lacquer painted gunpowder box  
Rajasthan

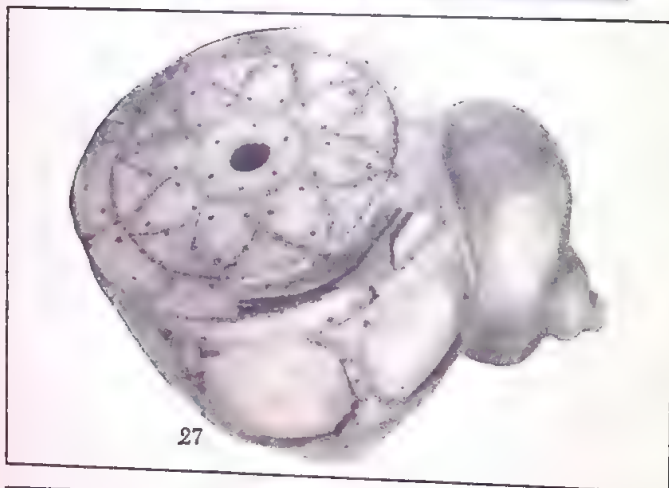
- 29. Ink well, craftsman's fantasy in creating an  
ink pot in brass with the mahout and the  
rider, and the elephant holding a plant
- 30. Standing image of Vishnu in brass with  
studded precious stone  
Maharashtra, 17th century
- 31. Lime container  
Maharashtra, 19th century



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32. Brass agarbatti holder in the form of a beautiful bird
33. Brass lamps, the square one with four peacocks is from South India 18th century; and the other large peacock with intricate surface ornamentation is from Orissa, 19th century
34. Hanging lamp, a pagoda-like symmetrically designed lamp, Nepal, 19th century

35. Contemporary lamp
36. Brass decorative lamp 19th century
37. Gyroscopic lamp Rajasthan, 19th century
38. Hanging brass chain lamp with Garuda, South India, 19th century
39. Wooden, highly decorative standing lamp, Rajasthan, 19th century
40. A decorative standing Kashmiri lamp 19th century



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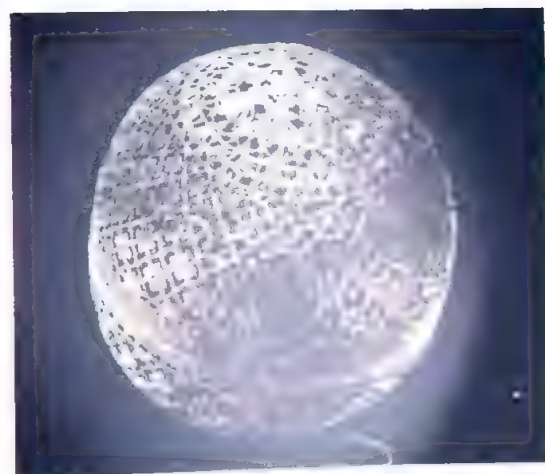
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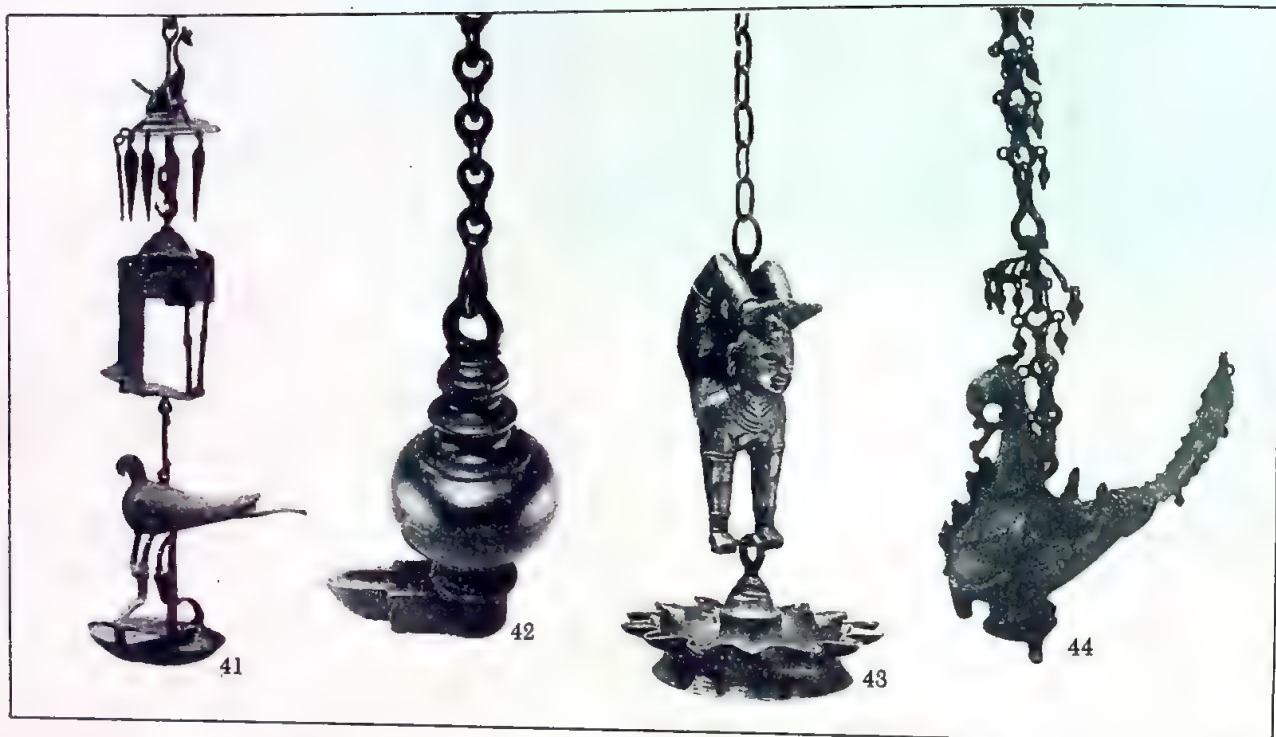


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41. A tribal lamp,  
Madhya Pradesh, 19th century
42. Nando-deep, hanging lamp  
South India, 19th century
43. A hanging lamp, with an acrobatic female  
figure  
Maharashtra, 19th century
44. A highly decorative bird lamp  
Gujarat, 18th century
45. An oil lamp with an oil store and a spoon,  
used for lighting other lamps
46. A tribal lamp, with bird motif,  
Orissa, 19th century
47. A woman holding dhoop burner in right  
hand (very rare)  
South India
48. A beautiful decorative lock  
Hyderabad
49. An iron horse-lock  
Gujarat, 18th century (very rare)
50. A South Indian standing lamp  
Kerala, 19th century





51. *Highly decorative hooka pot  
Hyderabad, early 19th century*
52. *Hooka pot with a lady  
Rajasthan, 19th century*
53. *Hooka pot with intricate engravings  
Hyderabad, 19th century*
54. *Hooka pot  
Maharashtra, 18th century*
55. *Hooka  
Gujarat, 19th century*

56. *Copper hooka with animal motif  
Kashmir, 19th century*
57. *Ganga-Jamna pots used in Puja  
19th century*
58. *A Ganga-jal holder; highly decorative pot  
Banaras, 19th century*
59. *A hanging brass ink-pot with seven  
musicians all-round  
Gujarat, early 17th century*





- 60. Kachhapi Veena  
South India, contemporary
- 61. Kachhapi Veena  
South India, contemporary
- 62. Ghatam, Tumbaknari, Gumattai  
South India, contemporary
- 63. Thavalei Sandhu  
South India, contemporary

- 64. Viladi Yazh  
South India, contemporary
- 65. Peacock Sitar  
South India, contemporary
- 66. Snake-shaped Tanpura  
South India, contemporary
- 67. Narayan Veena  
South India, contemporary



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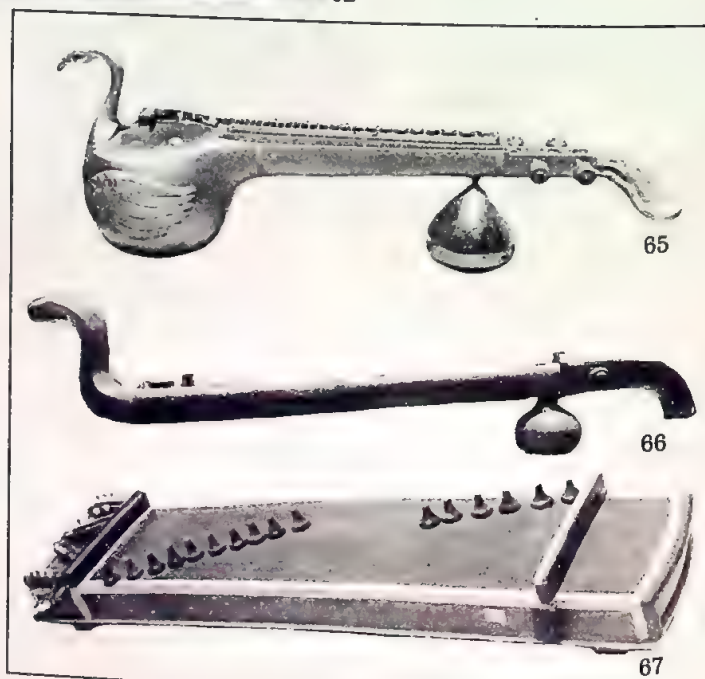
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68. Silver Pichkari for sprinkling coloured water during Holi  
Maharashtra, 18th century
69. A Kutch blouse with delicate embroidery
70. A Khus fan from Saurashtra, Gujarat
71. A pouch from Kutch with delicate embroidery work

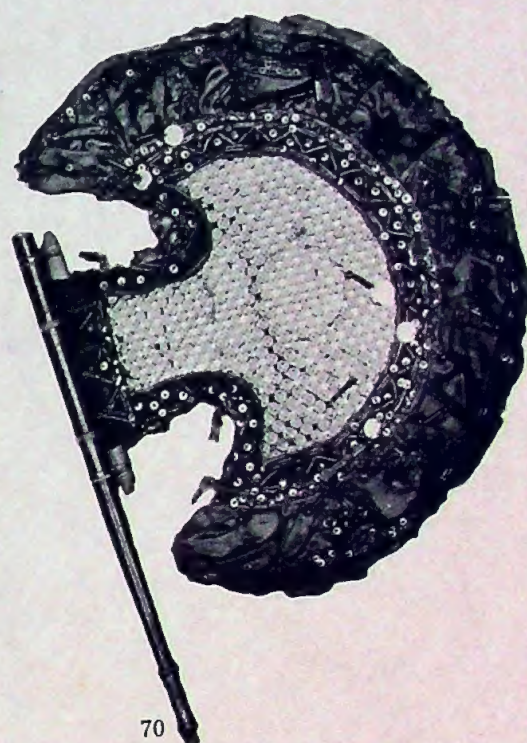
72. Khal-batta for crushing pan
73. Rangoli design box
74. Historical copper plate
75. Golden plated decorative back cover for a horse  
Rajasthan



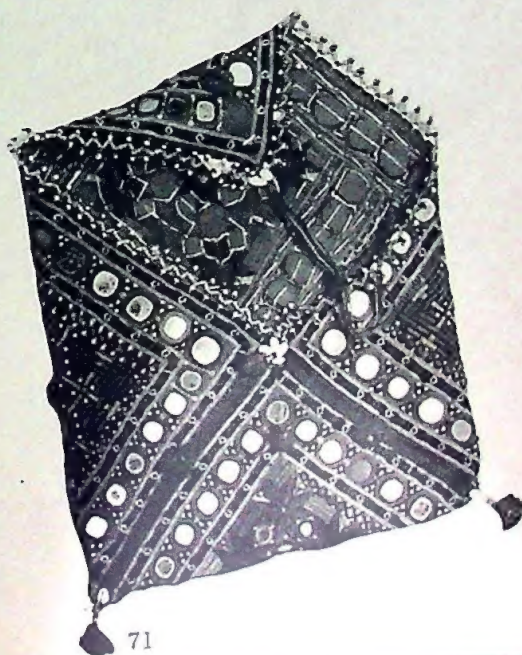
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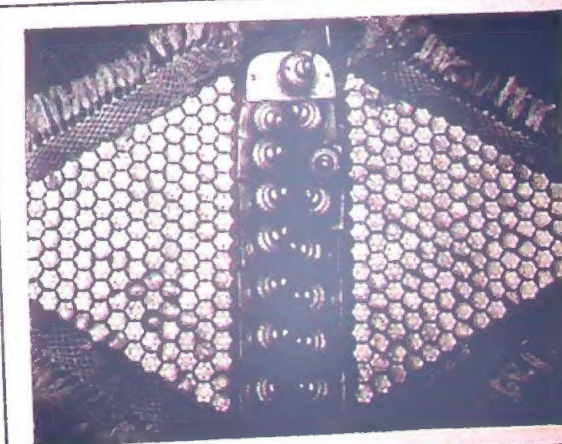


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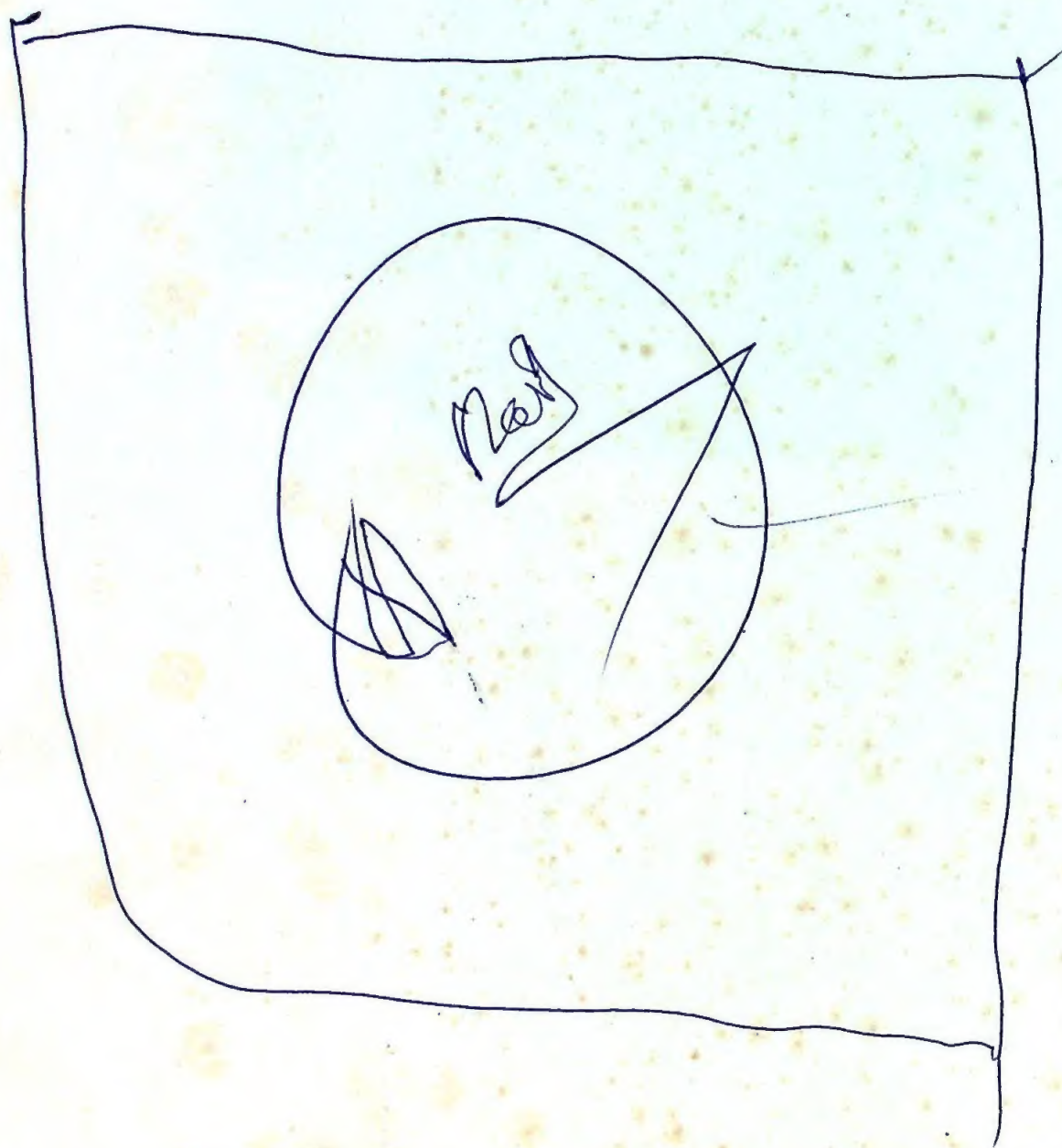


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SD

Neck